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SWIFTLY THE PAMPAS FIRE WAS CREEPING TOWARD THE PARTY.
Page 305.

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CHASED ACROSS THE PAMPAS

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Pan-American Series

CHASED ACROSS THE PAMPA

OR

AMERICAN BOYS IN ARGENTINA AND HOMEWARD BOUND

BY

EDWARD STRATEMEYER

Author of "Lost on the Orinoco," "Old Glory Series," "Dave Porter Series,"
"Lakeport Series," "Colonial Series," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN GOSS



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PREFACE

“CHASED ACROSS THE PAMPAS” is a complete story in itself, but forms the sixth and final volume of a line issued under the general title of “Pan-American Series.”

As mentioned before, my object in writing this series has been to acquaint our boys with the sights to be seen in the three Americas—especially such portions as lie outside of the United States. In the first volume, called “Lost on the Orinoco,” the five young explorers, with their tutor, who was something of a hunter, visited Venezuela; in the next volume, entitled “The Young Volcano Explorers,” the scene was shifted to Cuba, Porto Rico, and the ill-fated islands of Martinique and St. Vincent; then in “The Young Explorers of the Isthmus,” the sightseers journeyed from one end of Central America to the other, and learned what had still to be done to bring the great Panama Canal to a finish.

From Central America the young explorers went to Brazil, as related in the next book, called “The

Young Explorers of the Amazon.” They had numerous adventures on and near this largest river of the world, and then journeyed into Peru, as related in the fifth volume of the series, entitled “Treasure Seekers of the Andes.” They found a treasure, although not exactly in the manner anticipated, and then journeyed to Cuzco, the ancient capital of Peru, and to Lake Titicaca, where we last left them.

In the present volume the boys and their tutor travel through Bolivia and then down the coast of Chili, and later on across the mountains to the immense pampas, or prairies, of Argentina. Here they are followed by their enemies, who incite some gauchos to make the young explorers prisoners, stating that their families are rich and will pay well to have them liberated. What this led to, and how the lads finally reached Buenos Aires and set sail for home, I leave the pages which follow to tell.

In bringing this series to a close I wish to thank my many readers for all the nice things they have said about my previous books. I trust the present volume will be found equally entertaining, and will prove instructive.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

June 1, 1911.

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CHASED ACROSS THE PAMPAS

CHAPTER I

CAUGHT IN A SNOWSTORM

"SAY, this is fierce!"

"Fierce? I should say it was, Mark! Why, it seems to be snowing at the rate of a mile a minute!" observed Frank Newton.

"And it was as clear as a bell when we started out this morning," grumbled a third youth of the party. "Whoever would have thought of catching a downfall like this in the Andes?"

"If we don't look out we'll lose our way," growled a tall, lank youth. "It was foolishness to start on such a trip, anyhow."

"Well, Jake, you didn't have to come," answered the boy named Mark.

"Huh! Do you suppose I wanted to stay all alone in that miserable little Bolivian village, with

nobody but those villainous-looking natives around?" growled Jacob Hockley. "Not much! I'd be afraid of being robbed."

"Oh, the natives are honest enough in these parts—Professor Strong said so," said another of the boys. "But never mind all that now. The question is whether to go forward or turn back." And Darry Crane looked anxiously at his companions. "We are at least ten miles from that village—maybe fifteen," he added.

"I guess we had better halt and wait for the professor," said Sam Winthrop.

"Yes, but, Beans, perhaps he won't be able to reach us, with the snow coming down so thickly. Just look back. The trail is completely blotted out!" And Frank Newton turned the burro he was riding, so that he might get a better view of the trail the party had been pursuing.

"Phew! listen to the wind coming up, boys!" gasped Darry Crane, a moment later. "Puts me in mind of one of our Western blizzards! If I know anything about it, the best thing we can do is to hike for shelter."

"It's easy enough to say that, but where are you going to find shelter in such a lonely spot as this?"

came in disgust from Jake Hockley. "I'll wager there isn't even a hut within a mile."

"We had better turn back—and try to meet the professor, if he is coming," said Mark Robertson. "It would be foolhardy to try to go on in such a storm as this."

"And it is going to be worse—much worse," cried Darry Crane, and now his voice had a trace of genuine anxiety in it.

"How do you know that, Darry?" questioned one of the others.

"Because this burro I'm riding is beginning to tremble. He wouldn't do that unless he felt something coming. Horses always know when danger is at hand."

"Yes, you're right, and my animal is trembling, too," added Sam Winthrop. "Come on, let us turn back, before it is too late."

All of the five boys were mounted on Bolivian burros, small but strong animals, well trained to mountain-trail climbing. Now they turned the steeds around, to go back the way they had come.

It was snowing thickly, the big flakes completely blotting out the landscape around them. Ahead and to one side was the steep mountain, behind and

on the other side the valley wherein nestled the city of La Paz, and the village from which they had taken their departure less than three hours before.

As the young burro riders turned to go down the mountain trail, a wild gust of wind struck them in the face, almost taking their breath away. Then, from a distance, came a strange roaring, gradually growing louder and louder.

"What's that?" asked Jake Hockley, his face blanching.

"It sounds to me like a tornado," answered Darry Crane. "And if it's anything like the one I went through once in Montana, we'd better stand from under, and right away, too!"

"But where can we go?" asked two of the others, in concert.

"I noticed an overhanging cliff a distance back," said Mark Robertson. "Maybe we can get under that until the worst of the storm is over."

"If it doesn't last so long that we are snowed in!" whined the tall, lank youth.

"Oh, Glummy, don't be so gloomy!" burst out Sam Winthrop. "I don't believe we'll be snowed in to-day."

"Huh! You don't know anything about it!"

was the growled-out reply. "It's snowing harder than ever!"

"Back to the cliff!" shouted Mark Robertson, and it was now difficult to make himself heard. "Don't waste any time! Follow me!" And he slapped his burro on the flank, to urge the steed to greater speed.

"I hope we run across the professor," said Frank Newton. "I am sorry now we didn't wait for him in the first place. If he was along he'd know what was best to do. He has had all kinds of experience as a traveler."

"Don't talk, but come on!" urged Darry Crane. "This blizzard—or whatever it is—is working up to something big, and the sooner we get to shelter the better."

Scarcely had he uttered the words when the roaring of the wind increased, and a blast swept by that almost took boys and burros off the trail. The youthful riders clung close to their steeds' necks, and the animals themselves bent low in an endeavor to escape the fury of the elements.

"I'm afraid we ca-ca-can't ma-make it!" gasped Sam Winthrop.

"We've got to make it!" urged Mark Robert-

son. "Come on, and keep close together. If we don't reach the shelter of the cliff the next rush of air may send us off the trail into the valley!"

And then all moved along the downward trail as well as the fury of the storm permitted—in an endeavor to find some shelter where they might be safe for the time being.

To those who have read the former volumes in this "Pan-American Series" the boys who are having such a hard time of it in this South American snowstorm will need no special introduction. For the benefit of those who may now meet them for the first time, let me state that Mark Robertson was a New York boy, living, when at home, in fashionable quarters on Madison Avenue. Across the way dwelt Frank Newton, the son of a banker, and the two lads had been warm chums for years.

Of the other boys in the party, Samuel Winthrop was from Boston—whence his nickname of "Beans." He was the only son of a rich widow who resided in the fashionable Back Bay district of the Hub. Usually Sam was a studious youth and much given to the collection of specimens, but he was often ready for a good time, and always willing to look on the bright side of things.

The lad with the curly hair and laughing eyes was Dartworth Crane, always called Darry for short. Darry was the offspring of a rich Chicago cattle dealer, and had spent some of his younger years on a ranch in the far West. He could ride well, and knew "hossflesh" thoroughly.

These four boys had been close friends for years. They had gone through many adventures and not a few perils together, and the concern of one was invariably the concern of all.

The fifth lad of the party was the tall, thin youth, with a freckled face and coarse, reddish hair. This was Jacob Hockley, usually called Jake, and sometimes Glummy, or Jake the Glum, because of his habit of looking on the dark side of things. Jake was the son of a millionaire lumber dealer of Pennsylvania, but his riches did not seem to improve his disposition, which, at times, was either sour or dictatorial.

My new readers may wonder how these five boys came to be traveling in the heart of the Andes Mountains. The explanation is very simple. All had at one time attended a boarding-school presided over by a Professor Amos Strong, who, in his younger years, had been a great hunter and

traveler. A fire burned the institution of learning to the ground, and while it was being rebuilt under the supervision of the professor's brother, Amos Strong decided to carry out a long-cherished plan of visiting Central and South America and other places of interest, taking with him such pupils as could afford to go, and wished to do so.

A party was quickly made up of Sam, Frank, Mark, and Darry, and then Professor Strong announced that Jake Hockley wished to go also. This did not quite suit the four chums, but they had no real reason for complaining, and so decided to make the best of the situation.

From New York the five boys and the professor set sail for Venezuela, and in the first volume of this series, entitled "Lost on the Orinoco," I gave the particulars of some adventures on and near that mighty river. While on the way, Jake Hockley struck up an acquaintance with a sharper from Baltimore named Dan Markel, and this unprincipled fellow caused the whole party considerable trouble.

From Venezuela the young explorers turned back, to visit Cuba, Porto Rico, and other islands of the West Indies. This was just before the awful eruption of Mont Pelée, and in the second

volume, called "The Young Volcano Explorers," I related the details of that world-stirring event, with its harrowing loss of life. All the young tourists suffered somewhat from the calamity, and Jake Hockley was so badly scared that he ran away, boarding a steamer bound for Trinidad.

Before turning southward once more, it was decided by Professor Strong and the boys to visit Central America, and see what was being done to build the great Panama Canal. In the volume entitled "The Young Explorers of the Isthmus," I related the details of that trip, and also told how Hockley became the open enemy of the others. This brought on a fight that had an unlooked-for ending—something that caused the bully to act more meekly for a long time after.

From the Isthmus the young tourists set sail for Brazil, and in the volume called "The Young Explorers of the Amazon," I told how they visited Rio de Janeiro, Para, and other cities, and then sailed up the mighty Amazon, the father of all inland watercourses. Here they again met their old enemy, Dan Markel, and thwarted his efforts to swindle another man in a rubber plantation deal.

From Brazil the boys and their tutor journeyed over the mountains into Peru, and in the next volume of the series, called "Treasure Seekers of the Andes," I told how they visited Truxillo, Lima, and other points of interest, and how they went out in quest of game, and also went on a great treasure hunt. On this hunt some of the boys got lost, and the others had to organize a searching party to find them. The treasure they unearthed proved to be worth almost twenty thousand dollars, which, as Frank declared, "was not so bad."

During the days in Peru the boys again met Dan Markel, and, as before, he tried to make trouble for them. One day he was caught by Jake Hockley, and the lank youth was so wrought up that he gave the swindler the thrashing of his life, and then made him a prisoner. It was found that Markel had some money, and Professor Strong gave him his choice of settling up for his past crookedness or taking his chances with the local police authorities. Markel, after much pleading, agreed to settle up, and, after doing so, was allowed to go. Later the boys heard that Markel had taken a steamer bound for Valparaiso, Chili.

"Good! I am glad he is gone!" declared Sam.

"I never want to see him again, or hear from him."

"Oh, he's like a bad penny—bound to turn up," answered Mark. And that very day Professor Strong received a highly-abusive letter from the sharper, stating that he would "fix them all" some day, and that they had better beware of him.

From Lima the young tourists and Professor Strong journeyed to Cuzco, the ancient capital of Peru, and then moved on to Lake Titicaca. Here the whole crowd had more than a week of fine weather, and spent the days in boating, fishing, and swimming. Then they moved onward to La Paz, in Bolivia. They took up headquarters in the city, but two days later moved to the mountain village of Gobiago, their intention being to make a trip to one of the mountain tops, to get a view of the surrounding country. All started off together, but half-way up the mountain the burro the professor rode went lame, and he turned back to the village to get another steed. The boys kept on, until a sudden snowstorm overtook them, as already described.

CHAPTER II

HOW TWO BOYS DISAPPEARED

“WAIT! Wait! Don’t leave me behind!”

The cry came from Jake Hockley. He had been bending low over his burro’s neck, to escape as much of the fury of the gale as possible, and now he straightened up, to discover that the other lads were well ahead of him.

“Come on—don’t lag!” shouted Mark. “The storm is growing worse every minute.”

“The confounded beast won’t go any faster!” wailed the tall youth. “I’ve done my best to make him go, but he’s too lazy.”

“You saw too much on the reins, Jake,” explained Darry. “You’ve got the burro so worried he doesn’t know what he is doing. Just pat him a little on the neck and he’ll go all right. He’s just as anxious to get to shelter as you are—for he knows what these blizzards on the mountain trails mean.”

"It seems to be letting up a bit," broke in Frank. "The wind is dying down. Maybe it will be safe to go on, after all."

"Don't you believe it!" cried Sam. "The wind will be roaring worse than ever in a few minutes. Me for the best shelter I can find!" And on he went on the return trail.

"Those natives in the village warned us of a snowstorm," said Mark. "But I didn't look for any such downfall as this."

"Well, you must remember that we are at an altitude of nearly three miles," came from Frank.

"Three miles!" cried Darry. "How do you know that?"

"I looked it up in the guidebook. Alto La Paz, where we got off the railroad train, is 13,000 feet above sea level. That's about two miles and a half. Well, we have climbed another half-mile above that, I am sure."

"More like a mile!" grumbled Hockley. "Oh, but this is beastly!" he added. "I'd give as much as ten dollars to be back in my comfortable room at the La Paz hotel."

"Well, we can't get back there just now," answered Mark. "We'll be lucky if we get down to

that village we started from. Here comes that wind again!" he shouted, as a distant roaring reached their ears.

With the increase in the wind came a heavier fall of snow, and once again was the landscape blotted out on every side. The boys kept as close together as possible, Hockley following Darry's directions about handling his mount. The Western youth kept at his side, giving him additional directions.

"Be careful now—we are coming to that sharp turn!" shouted Mark a half-minute later. "Don't miss the trail, or you'll go down into the canyon and be killed!"

He had hardly spoken when an extra-heavy blast of wind struck the crowd. The burros shivered and turned partly around, and for the time being there was a mix-up of boys and steeds.

"Don't crowd me!" yelled Hockley. "Don't do it, or I'll go over the edge!"

"Be careful!" called out Mark, in keenest anxiety.

The roaring of the elements now drowned out every other sound. The snow, as fine and as hard as salt, swirled in all directions, entering their ears and eyes, and almost blinding them. Hockley

crowded close to Mark, and both made the dangerous turn in safety. Just ahead was the tall cliff under which they hoped to find shelter, and each made a dash for it.

The wall of the cliff arose to a height of nearly two hundred feet. At its base it was split in a number of places, and it was for the largest of these openings that Mark headed, with Hockley close beside him. The split was irregular in shape, but it was so high and wide that they rode into it with ease.

"Look out for holes!" shouted Mark, and it was well he said this, for the cavern-like opening had a number of holes in its flooring into which one might easily have fallen to unknown depths.

Safe from the worst of the blizzard that was now raging outside, Mark and Hockley brought their steeds to a halt and did what they could to get back their breath. They were fifty feet from the trail proper, and the whirling snow cut off their view completely.

"Where are the others?" questioned Mark, after nearly a minute had passed and nobody had appeared.

"I thought they were right behind us," answered

the tall youth. "Say, you don't suppose they slipped off the trail, do you?" he went on, in scared tones.

"I hope not, Jake. Maybe they can't locate this place. Let us call to them."

Filling their lungs with air, both boys shouted loudly. But their efforts seemed puny compared with the roaring of the elements battling on the mountain pass. Then Mark dismounted, secured his burro to a rock, and walked out to the face of the cliff.

"Frank! Sam! Darry! Where are you?" he yelled several times.

No answer came back, and now Mark was thoroughly frightened.

"Perhaps the burros got tangled up when that heavy wind struck them, and all went over into the canyon together," he reasoned. "If they did that some of the fellows may be killed! Oh, if only this storm would let up!"

"You are not going out there again, are you?" asked Hockley, coming after Mark. "It won't do any good—you'll get lost yourself." He did not wish to be left alone in the cavern.

"We've got to learn what has become of them,

Jake! Just think of what may have happened if they went down into the canyon! It's nothing but jagged rocks down there!"

"Yes, but you can't do a thing in this high wind. Wait here until the wind goes down, or until Professor Strong comes."

Mark did not wish to wait—he was burning with impatience to learn what had become of his three chums. But he realized that he could do absolutely nothing in that frightful wind, that sent the hard snow along until it cut like a knife. Even at the mouth of the cavern he could scarcely breathe, the fine white particles going up his nose like snuffed-up pepper.

Several minutes passed—just then they seemed an age to Mark and Hockley—and then came a faint cry, borne in on the roaring wind.

"Did you hear that, Jake?"

"Yes, somebody called!"

"I think it was Darry! Yell for all you are worth!"

The boys raised their voices, and kept it up until Mark caught sight of Darry on his burro, plowing through the snow. The Western youth was all but exhausted, and kept in his saddle with difficulty.

"Darry, where are the others?" shouted Mark, as he rushed forward and caught hold of the burro, to lead him into the cavern.

"Gone!" gasped the other lad, and then did his best to catch his breath.

"Did they go over into the canyon?"

"Yes." Darry tried to say more, but could not. He swayed in the saddle and would have fallen into the snow had not his chum caught him.

"Bring in the burro, Jake!" called out Mark, and while the lank youth did as bidden, Mark carried Darry into the cavern, to a spot where the fury of the elements could not reach them. The Western boy was so exhausted that it was several minutes before he got back sufficient strength to tell his story.

"I—I don't know how it hap-happened!" he gasped out. "I guess Sam's burro was kicked by the one Jake was riding. Then they got in a mix-up, and the next thing I knew Sam and Frank and their burros were missing."

"My burro didn't kick anything!" growled Hockley.

"I think he did, Jake. But that wasn't your

fault," added the Western lad, hastily. "The blizzard made the animals wild—they couldn't see any more than we could. When I couldn't see Frank and Sam I yelled to them, but they didn't answer. I knew you two had gone on ahead. I called to you to come back, but I suppose you didn't hear me."

"Not a word," answered Mark. "And you didn't see or hear anything of them, did you, Darry?"

"No, I looked along the up-trail, thinking that possibly the blizzard had twisted 'em up, and then I rode my burro as close to the edge of the canyon as he would go. But I couldn't see a thing, not even a hoof-mark. They had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened up and swallowed 'em!"

"Maybe it did do that!" cried Hockley. "They have all sorts of earthquakes down here."

"There was no earthquake or we would have felt it," answered Mark. "They must have slipped from the trail and gone down into the canyon. Oh, this is the worst yet! I wonder what we can do!"

"Can't do much until the wind lets up," an-

swered Darry. "I stayed out there as long as I could. It's almost certain death to try to do anything out there now."

"Oh, but, Darry, we can't leave Sam and Frank to perish!"

"Mark, I'm as willing to do anything as you are. But you can't imagine how it is blowing around that turn of the trail! Why, it nearly lifted my burro off his feet! And the fine snow gets right into your lungs!"

"It's sheer foolishness to think of going out there while this blow lasts," broke in Hockley, strenuously. "Don't you attempt it, Mark. Most likely, if they went down into the canyon, they landed in some safe place. The burros would protect them in falling."

"Maybe they came down with the animals on top of 'em," sighed Mark. "And I don't believe there is any safe place to fall to down there. I'd go out, if I thought I could do the least bit of good," he added, wistfully.

He looked forth again. The wind was howling and shrieking through the mountain pass, and all was a whirl of white. Hockley had been right—it would be sheer foolishness to attempt to do any-

thing just then. With a sickening heart, Mark turned back and joined the others.

"I wish we could start some kind of a fire," remarked Hockley, after a pause, during which each boy had been busy with his thoughts. "I'm about half frozen."

"Start one, if you can find anything to start it with," answered Mark, and gave a long sigh.

"I noticed a part of a broken-down cart near here when we came past the first time. I'll see if I can find that."

While the tall youth roamed around searching for firewood, Mark and Darry huddled close to their burros and discussed the situation. The Western youth felt certain that Sam and Frank had fallen from the trail into the canyon, but did not know the exact spot.

"I wish I had kept my eyes on 'em," he said, sorrowfully. "But I thought they'd follow to this place."

"Oh, Darry, supposing they are killed!"

"Don't say that, Mark! It makes me shiver from head to feet!"

"Do you suppose the professor is safe?"

"I don't know. He may have considered it his

duty to rejoin us when the blizzard started, and he may have gotten stormbound somewhere between here and that village where he was going to get the fresh burro. If he knew about Sam and Frank he'd be as much worried as we are."

"And just to think of having such a thing as this happen—after all our adventures in Central America and along the Amazon and elsewhere!"

"Yes, and just when we were figuring that we'd start for home in another two months! If Sam and Frank are killed I'll never get over it, never!"

"It will certainly be a sad ending to this tour," added the other youth, seriously.

CHAPTER III

THE DESCENT INTO THE CANYON

HOCKLEY had been right about seeing an abandoned cart along the trail, close to the cliff. With a rope he managed to fasten his burro to the wreckage and drag it into the shelter. Then, with a hatchet Mark was carrying, the cart was split up into firewood, and soon a small blaze was started against the rocks.

"I won't use too much of the firewood at once," said the tall youth, "because there is no telling how long we'll have to stay here."

"Just as you say, Jake," answered Mark, listlessly. Now that Sam and Frank were missing, he could take but little interest in what the tall boy was doing.

"I think I'd better make some coffee, too," went on Hockley. "It will warm us up, and that is what we need."

A lunch had been brought along by each of the

young explorers, and Hockley carried a coffee-pot and Darry a frying-pan. Soon the tall boy had some snow melted, and then he made the coffee and passed it around in some collapsible drinking-cups which were a part of their outfit.

"Better have something to eat, too," suggested Hockley. But Mark and Darry shook their heads, being in no humor for a meal. The tall boy ate several sandwiches with a relish. All drank the steaming coffee, and it braced up Mark and Darry not a little.

An hour passed, and presently the fury of the storm seemed to die away. The snow still came down, but it was not as thick as before, and the wind was now little more than a gentle breeze.

"I believe it will clear off before nightfall," remarked Darry, after studying the sky. "But it was a corker while it lasted; wasn't it?"

"As soon as it is safe to do so, Darry, we must go in search of Sam and Frank," said Mark.

"Of course. We can go now, if you say so."

"Wait a while, and I'll go with you," cried Hockley. "I'll pack up the things first. Who knows that we shall come back this way?"

"Jake is right," answered Mark. "There is no

telling where our hunt for Sam and Frank will lead us."

"Hello! hello!" came from the trail, in a strong, heavy voice, and a minute later a well-known form appeared, followed by two natives, all mounted on burros.

"Professor Strong!" cried Mark and Darry, eagerly. "We were hoping you would come along."

"It has been a fierce storm, boys," answered Amos Strong, as he rode up to the split in the cliff. "I had just gotten a new mount when it descended on the village, and then it was out of the question for me to come up here. I felt sure you would seek shelter, but I wasn't sure you'd find as good a spot as this. Where are Sam and Frank?"

"We don't know, but we are afraid they fell off the trail into the canyon," answered Mark.

"What?" cried the professor, and the tone showed his immediate and deep concern.

"Darry saw them last—he will tell you what he knows," went on Mark, and then the Western boy gave the particulars of the sudden disappearance.

"We must look into this at once," declared Professor Strong. "I was afraid something might

happen, so I brought these two natives along. They are Quichua Indians, and they know every foot of the trail, and know the canyon also. The taller of the two can speak a little English. He says he once worked for an American civil engineer employed on the railroad surveys."

The three young explorers were soon in the saddle. While they were getting ready Amos Strong explained to the Indians that two of the boys were missing.

"Sombo know," answered the native who could speak English. "Big wind—blow horse in sky—come down in big hole—break bones, yes, sometime neck! We look and see, yes." And he nodded his head rapidly.

"Well, I hope they didn't go up in the sky and come down and break their necks," returned the professor. "But certainly that wind was strong enough to do almost anything."

"Once big wind take whole pack train off—llamas, horses, everyt'ing," said Sombo. "Big wind bad, sometime, yes." And then he told the other native of what had occurred.

All were soon on the trail, Darry leading the way. The snow continued to come down, but the

wind had almost died away entirely. The burros did not tremble now, which Darry took as a sign that the danger from the tornado, or blizzard, or whatever it might be called, was past.

A few minutes' ride brought the whole party to the turn in the trail, and there, as well as he was able, Darry pointed out the spot where he had last seen Sam and Frank. This done, the two Quichuas dismounted and commenced to search in the snow for some trace of the missing lads. Then the others, with the exception of Hockley, did likewise.

"You are quite certain this is the spot, Dartworth?" questioned the professor, after all had looked around for several minutes without seeing anything out of the ordinary.

"I think this is the place, sir," was the reply. "Of course, it was blowing so hard I may have made a mistake. I could hardly see a thing."

"Yes, I can understand that. It's a wonder you didn't go off, too."

"I kept my burro as close to the inner side of the trail as possible. Of course, on account of his load, he wanted to take the outside edge, same as all burros, but I wouldn't allow that."

"Here dis!" shouted Sombo at this juncture, and brought out of the snow a heavy fur cap.

"That is Frank's new cap!" cried Mark. "The one he bought in La Paz day before yesterday."

"Then this must be the spot!" cried Amos Strong. "A nasty place truly," he continued, as he walked cautiously forward.

It certainly was a dangerous spot on the trail. The path was not over six feet wide, and lined on one side by a series of jagged rocks extending upward hundreds of feet. On the other the same jagged rocks extended downward into the canyon, ending in a sheer cliff, the bottom of which was lost to view in timber and brushwood.

"See anything?" asked Mark, after a silence of fully a minute.

"Not a thing," declared Professor Strong, in sober tones. "But I suppose the snow has covered their tracks."

"Look out, or you'll go down, too," cried Jake, in alarm, as the professor crawled still closer to the edge.

"Perhaps I'll have to go, Jacob," was the calm reply.

"You go down? You'll be killed!"

"Of course I'll not go on horseback. We must find out what has become of them, one way or another."

"Of course we've got to find out!" cried Darry. "I'll go with you, if you want me to."

"And I'll go, too," added Mark.

"What have we got in the way of a lasso or rope?" questioned Amos Strong.

The packs were inspected, and a rope of good size was found. Darry had a lasso, and so had each of the Quichuas.

"I think the descent will be fairly safe if we tie ourselves to the rope and the lassoes, as they do in Switzerland," said Professor Strong.

"Excuse me, I don't want to go down there!" faltered Hockley. "Why, if a fellow slipped he'd be smashed to pieces!"

"Very well, Jacob; you can remain behind and watch the burros," answered the tutor.

Matters were explained to the natives, and they readily consented to join the others in the attempt to get down into the canyon. It was decided that one of the Indians should go first, then Professor Strong, Darry next, and then the second Quichua, and Mark. All were bound together by the rope

and the lassoes, so that if one slipped the other could hold him up.

"Do be careful!" pleaded Hockley, when the others were ready to descend from the narrow trail. He was wondering what he should do if they failed to come back.

"When we get below, I'll fire my pistol to let you know we are safe," said Professor Strong. "Later on, if I fire two shots, you are to remain where you are for us. If I fire three shots, return to that village from which we started this morning, and take all the animals with you."

"But how will you get out of the canyon?"

"The Indians say there is another trail from below, leading into the village by a roundabout way. We may have to take that—if we find Sam and Frank hurt."

"Oh, I hope they are all right," answered Hockley. "Of course, they'll be sure to be shaken up."

"Let us give a final call," suggested Mark, and all raised their voices, even the Indians joining in. They listened with strained ears, but no reply came back to them.

With great caution Sombo, who was to lead, crawled from the trail to the first of the jagged

rocks below. As soon as he was safe, Professor Strong followed, and thus the line of five men and boys slowly disappeared from the sight of Jake Hockley, who viewed their movements with mixed wonder and alarm.

"Be careful!" he called, as Mark went down. "Those rocks are mighty slippery with that snow on 'em."

"We'll be as careful as we can—don't fear about that, Jake," answered Mark, and then he slid down and over a big flat stone, and was hidden from the gaze of the youth left behind. Hockley waited for a moment, and then drew a long breath and uttered a mountainous sigh. He felt lonely to the last degree.

"Why didn't we stay in La Paz instead of going on this foolhardy trip?" he muttered to himself. "I came down here to have a good time—not to run into all sorts of danger." And then he got to wondering if the wind were coming up again, and if he had not better get back to the shelter of the cliff.

Slowly and cautiously Sombo climbed down from one projecting rock to another, and with even greater caution the others followed him. Once

Darry slipped and slid a distance of several feet, but the lasso behind him checked his progress, and he was enabled to get a fresh hold on the rocks before any damage was done.

"Be careful!" warned Professor Strong, for the Western lad had landed almost on top of him. "Don't let go of one rock until you are sure of the next."

"The rock slipped, I didn't!" gasped Darry. "It was loose in the snow, but I didn't know that until it was too late."

Presently they came out on a level spot, and there all gathered in a bunch to rest, for the climb downward was positively nerve-racking.

"Bad place now," announced Sombo, after looking downward with care. "No take step till sure, yes, verra sure, yes."

"Very well, we'll try to be extra careful," answered Mark.

Over the edge slipped the Indian, and Professor Strong followed. Then the line gave a sharp jerk and Darry was carried downward before he could save himself. The second Indian and Mark followed.

"Stop!" yelled Mark.



BOYS AND MEN FOUND THEMSELVES SLIDING DOWNWARD.—Page 33.

"I ca-can't stop!" panted Darry. "Sombo must have lost his grip entirely."

There followed another jerk, and then, of a sudden, boys and men found themselves sliding downward over some slippery rocks well covered with snow. They did their best to stop themselves, but it was of no avail. Faster and faster they went, until with a bound they shot over an ice-covered edge, and then disappeared utterly from view!

CHAPTER IV

FROM ONE PERIL TO ANOTHER

"WHERE are we?"

"Bless me if I know!"

"Kindly get your feet off my neck!"

"Sombo make big slide—stones roll over, yes!"

Such were some of the remarks spluttered out as the whole crowd found themselves in a hollow well filled with snow. They had landed in a heap, but the loose snow had saved all from serious injury. Darry had received a kick in the shoulder, and one of the Quichuas had some skin scraped from his knee.

"Wow!" came from Mark. "Say, I guess I got about a foot of snow down my back!"

"My ears and nose were full of it," returned Darry.

"Anybody hurt?" questioned Amos Strong, when he felt able to speak.

"I reckon not enough to count," answered Darry.

"Say, that was a regular football pile-on, wasn't it!" he added, grimly.

To get out of the hollow was no easy task, for the sides were almost as smooth as a china bowl. Sombo tried it several times, only to slip backwards, and Mark was equally unsuccessful.

"I've got an idea!" cried Darry. "Mark, you are at the end of the line. Let that Indian stand on your shoulders. Then I'll crawl up somehow, and the professor and Sombo can follow. We can all rest against the rocks, so the strain won't be very great."

"A good idea, Dartworth," answered Amos Strong. "We'll put it into execution without delay."

The plan was successfully carried out, and once out of the hollow, the climb down to the bottom of the canyon was again begun. As they descended the depth of snow became greater.

"We must be careful that we don't go into snow over our heads," cautioned Professor Strong. "We don't want to be smothered."

"Maybe that is what happened to Sam and Frank," said Mark.

"Oh, don't think of it!" cried Darry.

"Let us hope for the best," said the tutor, gravely.

Presently they came to a spot where sliding was easy, and down they went for several hundred feet.

"Why, here is another trail!" cried Mark, as all halted. "It's a better trail than the one above."

"This udder trail to Gobiago," explained Sombo. "Good trail, yes."

"Do you think Sam and Frank landed here?" questioned Darry.

"I am sure I do not know, Dartworth. All we can do is to look around for them. When the wind was blowing the snow must have been very thick down here."

Beyond the lower trail was a sheer wall of rocks, down which it was impossible to climb. All came to a halt, and gazed anxiously up and down the trail, and then at each other.

"Let's set up a yell," suggested Mark. "They'll be sure to hear if they are anywhere in this vicinity."

"All right!" cried Darry. "Now then, all together!"

A ringing cry arose, that echoed and reëchoed through the canyon in spite of the falling snow.

"Now once more!" added the Western youth.
"We want to give them a chance to hear us."

Again the call arose—and then they waited without making a sound.

"I heard something!" exclaimed Mark, his voice trembling with excitement.

"So did I," added Professor Strong. "It was from a great distance."

"Could it have been Hockley calling?" questioned Darry.

"No, his voice could not carry down here. That call came from up the trail."

"Boy shout," said Sombo. "Boy dere!" And he pointed up the trail with his hand. "Long way, yes."

"It must be Sam or Frank!" cried Darry.
"Hello!" he yelled. "Hello! Sam! Frank!"

"Hello!" came faintly. "This way!"

"It's Frank's voice!" exclaimed the professor.
"We are coming!" he added, at the top of his lungs. "Are you on the trail?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Frank must be alone," remarked Darry.
"Where can Sam be?"

"That remains to be found out. Come, let us

go to Frank at once," said Amos Strong, with pardonable impatience.

All set off along the lower trail. Here the snow was over a foot deep, and consequently walking was anything but easy. At some places the jagged rocks jutted far out, and they had to climb around dangerous bends as bad as that where the first mishap had occurred.

From time to time they called out and thus learned that they were gradually drawing closer to Frank. Then they rounded another turn of the rocky trail and discovered the New York boy watching eagerly for them.

"Frank!" was the cry from the professor and the others.

"Hello! I'm glad somebody has got here," answered Frank, and his face showed his anxiety and his relief.

"Are you all right?" demanded Mark.

"Yes, all but a few scratches on my right leg."

"Where is Beans?" demanded Darry.

"Over under yonder rocks."

"Hurt?"

"A little. He struck his head and it made him feel rather queer. He's resting out of the storm."

"I am glad it is no worse," said Amos Strong, fervently. "You must have had an awful tumble."

"It happened so quickly that I hardly knew what was taking place," answered Frank, with a grim smile. "We were in a bunch on the trail, and the next thing I knew I was slipping over the rocks on my burro. I did my best to keep from going down under the animal, and when we landed on a rocky shelf I jumped from the saddle and tried to cling to the rock. Then, all of a sudden, Sam came along on his animal, and the three of us rolled over and over in the snow. Then Sam and I grabbed each other and clung to some other rocks, and his horse struck this trail and went over into the gorge. My burro saved himself from that by landing in a hollow full of snow. He got cut up a little, but that's all."

"Take us to where Sam is," said Amos Strong. "I trust his head is not badly injured."

"He has a lump on his forehead as big as a walnut," answered Frank. "But he says he doesn't care—he is thankful he wasn't killed—and I am thankful I wasn't killed, too," he added, with feeling.

"We are all thankful," said Mark.

“Where is Glummy?”

“We left him on the upper trail, in charge of the burros,” answered Darry, and then he added in a whisper: “He was afraid to try crawling down here.”

“Well, I don’t blame him much,” answered Frank, candidly. “It was a risky thing for you to do.”

“Huh! you didn’t suppose we’d go on and leave you to your fate, did you?” demanded Mark.

“We fired our pistols to inform you that we were safe,” said Frank.

“We didn’t hear any shots.”

“Then the tornado, or whatever it was, drowned out the sounds.”

All moved to the spot Frank indicated, and there they discovered the boy from Boston, seated on a rock in the shelter of a cliff. He had his forehead bound up in a bandage. Over this he wore his fur cap. Frank, having lost his new cap, had his head covered with an extra cap of wool. He was glad to get his new cap back.

“Oh, I’m all right, I guess,” said Sam, after greetings had been exchanged. “It all happened just as Frank told you—and it happened mighty

quick, too, I can tell you. I thought sure at first that I'd be smashed to pieces on the rocks at the bottom of the canyon. It's a lucky thing for us that this trail was here, otherwise nothing could have saved us."

"We ought to send up some sort of a signal to Jake," said Mark, a few minutes later. "I suppose he is mighty anxious."

"We'll fire off a pistol just as soon as we know what signal to send," answered Amos Strong. Secretly he was somewhat chagrined over the cowardice shown by the tall youth.

The matter was talked over, and it was decided to try to get to the village of Gobiago by means of the lower trail. They had one burro, and Sam, being the worst hurt of the party, could ride this, while the others walked.

"It's a good ten miles," said Amos Strong. "But perhaps we can find other means of transportation than walking before we get there."

One pistol shot was fired, to let Jake Hockley know they were safe, and this was followed by three other shots, to let him know that he was to return to Gobiago with the animals in his care. After a few seconds of waiting three shots came from

above, to show that their signals were heard and understood.

"It is of no use to look for the burro that fell into the canyon," remarked Professor Strong. "The distance here is hundreds of feet, so the animal must be dead. We'll have to pay for it, and that will end it."

"Well, it's good it's the burro instead of one of us," answered Mark.

In a few minutes the boy from Boston was mounted on the animal that had been saved, and the two Quichuas led the way on the trail in the direction of Gobiago.

"This is going to be a long walk," remarked Darry, in a low voice to Mark and Frank. "And I am pretty tired already."

"Well, we'll have to rest now and then, that's all," answered Frank. "Sam simply can't walk—and there is only one burro."

"Oh, I don't begrudge Beans the mount!" cried the Western youth, hastily. "But I do wish we could strike some horses, or mules, or even some llamas, if they were rideable."

The snow was coming down less thickly now, so they could see some distance ahead. They kept

steadily on, until a full mile was covered. Then they came to a spot where the trail broadened out, and here they found a low house of stone, built in the shelter of the mountainside.

"Here is some kind of a shelter!" cried Mark. "Why can't we go in there and rest up and have some lunch?"

"We might do that, if you wish it, Mark," answered Amos Strong. "And I was thinking of something else. We might rest here while Sombo went forward to the nearest village and got us some mounts. I know you must be tired out, and there is no use in walking when you can ride."

"Let us see what sort of a place this shelter is first," remarked Darry. "It may be such a filthy place we won't want to stop."

"I think I know what kind of a place it is," answered Amos Strong. "It is a road shelter, put up for travelers who may be caught in just such a blizzard as that you experienced on the upper trail. The government used to put them up for the protection of the mail and express carriers. We may find it quite a comfortable place—especially if there is enough wood around with which to start a fire."

All started for the low stone house, or, rather,

hut. The door was tightly closed, but a window in the side next to the mountain was broken open.

"I reckon it is deserted," observed Darry. "There is no smoke coming from the hole of a chimney, and if anybody was inside he'd most likely have a fire."

"I'll beat you to the door!" cried Mark, cheerily.

"Done!" cried Darry, and then both set off on a run for the stone hut. Mark got there first, but before he could open the door Darry plumped into him, and both went up against the barrier with a crash, almost taking it off its hinges. Then both lads went sprawling into the semi-darkness of the room beyond.

For the instant there was silence. Then, as both youths commenced to speak, a noise sounded out that thrilled them to the heart.

It was the unmistakable growl of some wild animal—a heavy, vicious growl, that meant but one thing—grave and immediate danger.

CHAPTER V

THE MOUNTAIN LION

“WHAT in the world is that?”

“I don’t know, Mark! But we had better get out of here!”

“There it is—a mountain lion! Look out, he is coming for us!”

As quickly as possible the two lads scrambled to their feet. As they did so, a tawny body swept through the semi-darkness of the stone hut and crouched close to the half-open door.

Instinctively the two youths stepped backwards, and this took them farther from the doorway. They could see the beast but dimly, yet the two glowing eyes that were turned on them were enough to make them shiver from head to foot.

A shout from outside reached their ears. Professor Strong was coming closer to the hut.

“What are you doing in there, boys?” he called out.

“Look out for the mountain lion!” yelled Darry, as loudly as he could.

Both the Western lad and Mark were armed, and were feeling for their revolvers. While doing this they kept their eyes fixed on the beast before them. The mountain lion was large and powerful, and the boys had met such a beast before and knew that if it made a leap they would have to get out of the way or run the danger of being mauled to death.

Mark was the first to draw his weapon, and, taking hasty aim, he fired two shots at the savage animal. There was a frightful roar, and the mountain lion leaped toward him. He sprang nimbly to one side, and the beast struck the wall of the stone hut with a thud.

Darry was now ready with his weapon, and as the beast turned he, too, fired twice. Mark had managed to hit the mountain lion in the right foreleg; Darry now put a bullet in the left foreleg, and thus the animal was seriously crippled. It continued to roar frightfully, and this noise told those outside something of what was going on.

“A wild beast is chewing them up!” cried Frank.

“Stand back, boys!” cried Amos Strong, and quickly he unslung the only rifle the party carried.

With this weapon in hand he ran for the door and kicked it open to its full extent.

At first only the smoke from the shots was to be seen. But as this cleared away the professor made out the form of the mountain lion, glaring ferociously from the shelter of a corner.

"Boys, where are you?" he called out, not wishing to risk a shot that might do them harm.

He had hardly spoken when several pistol shots from the knocked-out window rang out. The mountain lion leaped in the air, turned over several times, and then lay quiet. The professor glanced toward the window and saw that Mark and Darry had jumped through to the outside and were firing from this point of vantage.

"Do you think he's dead?" questioned the New York lad, when the smoke was clearing away and the mountain lion continued to lie motionless.

"I think so," answered Amos Strong. "But perhaps you had better give him another bullet in the head, to make sure," he added. Now that the danger was practically over, he did not wish to use the rifle and thus deprive the boys of the honor of having brought down the mountain lion alone.

Mark and Darry came around to the doorway,

and both advanced on the beast with caution. But the savage animal was dead, as they soon saw, so that another shot was unnecessary.

"Any more of 'em around?" asked Frank, as he came in to look at the mountain lion. "Sometimes they travel in pairs, you know."

"I'll take a look around," said Professor Strong. And he walked all around the hut, inside and out. But no more animals were in sight.

The Quichuas had been greatly alarmed when they learned that a mountain lion had been sighted. By them such a beast was to be given a wide berth, and this is not to be wondered at, since mountain lions of South America have been known to kill many a native, and have even carried off children. When it was announced that the animal was dead, both came in to view it with awe, and then they gazed admiringly at the lads who had laid such a powerful enemy low.

"Big hunters, yes," said Sombo. "Make best pistol knocks, yes," and he smiled broadly at Mark and Darry.

"'Pistol knocks' is good," remarked Sam. "But that is just what they did, anyway."

Aside from the dead mountain lion, the stone hut

was found to be deserted, and the party of explorers quickly made themselves at home there, building a fire in a corner set apart for that purpose, from wood brought in by the natives. Then Sombo and his companion set off for the nearest settlement, to obtain fresh mounts for them.

"I guess we can keep this lion skin," remarked Darry, after all had warmed up and rested. "It will make a nice rug at home. Do you want it, Mark?"

"No, Darry, I am satisfied to let you have it. I'll help you skin the beast if you say so."

"All right, Mark." And then the two boys set to work to strip the carcass of the mountain lion, no mean work, as they presently discovered. The pelt was heavy, and would undoubtedly make a fine rug.

It was growing dark once more, and presently the snow commenced to come down as thickly as ever. One of the packs was placed in the broken-out window, to keep out the air, and the door was all but closed. By this means, even with a scanty fire, the stone hut was kept moderately warm, and the Americans were correspondingly comfortable.

"How do you feel, Samuel?" questioned the

professor, when he noticed the Boston boy readjusting the bandage on his forehead.

"Oh, I think I'll be all right again in a day or two," was the reply. "But I certainly had a great tumble. I don't want another like it."

"No, we'll have to be extra careful after this. After traveling so many thousands of miles it would be a shame to have something happen when our great tour is so close to its end."

"Well, we've still got some distance to travel," answered Sam, with a faint smile. "Down to Valparaiso, and then across Argentina to Buenos Aires. Some folks would count that a tour in itself."

"You are right. We have certainly covered a great deal of ground since we left New York. I presume you'll be glad to get back to Boston."

"I'll be glad to see mother again. I fancy she has been rather lonely since I went away. It isn't as if father were alive."

"Well, you must send her letters regularly."

"I do that—and have ever since we left the United States. The trouble is, the letters don't always go as quickly as one would wish."

"I shall be glad to see the new school buildings," went on Amos Strong. "My brother writes that

they are almost finished and that they look very fine."

"We'll have a lot to tell the other fellows when we get back to school," broke in Mark.

"I'll wager they won't believe the half of it—how we escaped from that awful volcano eruption, and all that," came from Frank.

"And how we got lost on the Orinoco, and what wild times we had on the Amazon," put in Darry.

"And the treasure we unearthed in the Andes," cried Sam. "That sounds like a chapter from a story-book."

"But we've got the treasure to show—just as we've got this skin of a mountain lion," said Mark. "Seeing is believing, you know."

"When the other boys hear about all the good times we have had they'll want to go, too," said Frank.

"Well, the professor can organize another tour, during the next vacation," suggested Darry. "How about that, Mr. Strong?"

"We'll see about that when the time comes," was the reply, with a faint smile. "No use in talking about another trip before the present one is over."

Fortunately the party had a fair supply of eat-

ables along, and soon a meal was prepared, including some hot cocoa, which all drank with a relish. Then they sat down to rest until the return of the Quichuas with the fresh mounts.

"Professor, do you think we'll ever see that Dan Markel again?" asked Mark, presently.

"That is a hard question to answer," was the reply. "Several times I thought we had seen the last of him, and then, like the proverbial bad penny, he has turned up again. I certainly do not wish to see him."

"It's a pity we didn't have him put in prison when we had the chance," remarked Sam.

"I agree with you in one respect, Samuel. But you have had a chance to see how justice is administered down here. Everything moves very slowly, and had we made a formal charge, we might have been held as witnesses against Markel for an indefinite time. If only he keeps out of our path in the future, I shall be satisfied."

"But he sent that threatening letter," cried Darry. "That looks as if he meant to do something."

"The letter may be all bluster," was Amos Strong's comment. But in this the tutor was sadly

mistaken, as he found out ere many weeks had passed.

Night came on, and still there was no sign of Sombo or his companion. The professor and the boys looked out on the trail many times. The snow had almost ceased falling, but all was very dark.

"I don't see that there is anything to do but to turn in and wait till morning," announced Professor Strong at last. "We can't walk through the snow very well, and to attempt it on such a trail as this in the dark would be dangerous."

"Do you think the Indians have deserted us?" asked Sam.

"Oh, no—they were too anxious to earn the money I promised them. Either they have been unable to get the horses or burros wanted, or else they thought it best to wait until daylight. I am sure they will be back in the morning."

"Well, we didn't get to the mountain top, but we certainly seem to be having our share of adventures," remarked Darry.

"Instead of going to the top, Sam and I tried to get to the bottom," was Frank's dry comment.

All of the young explorers were so exhausted

that they went to sleep without difficulty, even though they rested on nothing better than some old brushwood, found piled up in one corner of the stone hut. Professor Strong remained awake for an hour after they retired, but then he, too, turned in, having first propped a big stone against the door and fastened the pack in the knocked-out window.

It was daybreak when the boys awoke. Darry was the first to get up, and he rushed to the door and threw it open. A flood of light came into the stone hut, for the sun was rising clear and bright over the mountain tops.

"A glorious day after the storm!" cried the Western youth, gayly. "Just see the snow and ice, shining like diamonds!"

"I see something on the trail!" announced Frank, after a long look. "I believe it is a pack train coming."

"I hope they have some grub to sell!" said Mark, who had viewed the diminished supplies with sorrow.

"It isn't a pack train—it's our Indians with the new mounts!" exclaimed Sam. "Hurrah! Now we'll be able to get back to Gobiago in jig time, and get back to La Paz, too."

The announcement that it was the two Quichuas who were returning was correct, and inside of a quarter of an hour they arrived at the stone hut. They had brought with them some horses and mules, and also the owner of the animals. On one of the mules was a pack, containing various things good to eat.

“No come las’ night in dark, no,” explained Sombo. “Start early to-day, yes—come just so quick dat way, yes. Bring eat and drink, you want, yes?”

“You just bet we want the stuff!” cried Darry, slangily. “It’s just what we have been waiting for. Now for a good breakfast, and then we’ll start for Gobiago.”

CHAPTER VI

AT THE LA PAZ MARKET PLACE

It was wonderful how the spirits of the boys arose when they saw the fresh steeds and the amount of things to eat that had been brought by the two Indians.

While the professor was negotiating with the owner of the horses and mules about getting back to the village and also to La Paz, the boys lost no time in cooking a substantial breakfast, of fried eggs, mutton chops, and coffee. To this were added some fresh bread brought in the pack, and some fruit cakes.

The owner of the mounts proved to be a reasonable man, and a bargain was quickly consummated with him, whereby they were to have the use of the horses and mules until La Paz was reached. This accomplished, all sat down to breakfast, and it is perhaps needless to state that each ate his full share of what was provided.

From Sombo it was learned that Hockley had arrived at Gobiago with the burros, and had agreed to remain at the village until the others of his party arrived. But he wanted them to hurry up, for the village, with its rather dirty natives, did not suit him at all.

"He say, you not come soon, he go La Paz, yes," added the Quichua. "Say, he wait at hotel La Paz for you, yes."

"Very well," answered Amos Strong.

Half an hour later breakfast was over, the packs made up, and the whole party started off along the snow-covered trail. The wind had gone down entirely, and the ascending sun made it a good deal warmer.

"A big change from yesterday," was Mark's comment. "How do you feel, Sam?"

"Feel as if I had been through a first-class football scrimmage," answered the Boston youth. "But I don't care—I am thankful I got off so easily. I'm glad the burro got killed, not I." And he shuddered as he thought of his narrow escape from serious injury, if not death.

The owner of the animals knew the mountain trail even better than did the Indians, and he led

the way, shouting back to them to avoid all dangerous places. But progress was slow, and it was noon by the time Gobiago was reached.

"Well, I thought you'd never get here!" came a hail, and Jake put in an appearance. "How is everybody?" and he glanced curiously at Sam and Frank.

"Oh, we're alive and kicking!" cried Frank, cheerily. "Sam got the worst of it."

"Tell me about it," said the tall youth, and once again the story of the mishap had to be related. The boys also told about the mountain lion.

"Wish I had been there—to get a crack at that lion," said Jake, a bit enviously. "I think a couple of shots from my big pistol would have finished him."

"Maybe," answered Darry, dryly.

"Oh, I know I could do it," went on the lank youth, boastfully.

"Well, we'll turn over the next mountain lion to you," returned the Western boy. He did not care to risk a dispute with Hockley.

A rest of an hour was made at Gobiago—a small village of no importance—and then, after a lunch, the whole party started for Alto La Paz, the sta-

tion where the railroad landed its passengers for La Paz proper.

"How much longer are we to stay in La Paz?" questioned Mark, when they were approaching the railroad station.

"Only a few days, Mark," returned Professor Strong. "Then we'll return to Lima and Callao, and there take the steamer for a sail down the coast to Valparaiso."

"Can we get a steamer?"

"Oh, yes, there is a regular line running—and they are fine boats, too."

From Alto La Paz, a winding road leads down the mountain side to the city, with its narrow streets, its stone buildings, and its queer, old-fashioned market place. On this road were numerous pack trains and teamsters, driving horses, burros, and llamas. Many of the teamsters were Cholo boys, with big hats, and heavy capes that came well up around their necks. But though everybody was dressed warmly from the head to the knees, many of the natives were barefooted!

"This barefooted custom gets me," remarked Mark, after he had taken a snap-shot photograph of a Cholo boy ankle-deep in snow and with a grin

on his face. "It's a wonder his feet don't get frozen."

"It is what you get used to," answered Professor Strong. "When you go to snowballing your hands get warm instead of cold. Well, your hands are just as sensitive as your feet."

As the party entered the city they came face to face with an immense flock of llamas, driven by a man and several boys. The llamas were a bit wild, and ran hither and thither, as if anxious to get back to the plains from which they had come.

"Say, I don't like this!" cried Jake, as two of the llamas crowded close to the mule he was riding. "Get away, you beast!" he roared, and made a slash at one of the llamas with a stick he was carrying for a whip.

"Don't hit them—you'll only make them wilder!" called out Amos Strong. "Just sit perfectly still, and they'll soon pass on."

But Hockley did not intend to sit still. He struck at the second llama. The animal whirled around and gave a kick at the mule. Promptly on the defensive, the mule kicked back. As his hind feet came up Jake slid down on the mule's neck. The llama was sent whirling into one of the other



"GET AWAY, YOU BEAST!" HE ROARED.—Page 60.

of the flock. Instantly there was confusion, and in the midst of this the mule let out another kick, raising up so high this time that poor Jake was thrown over his head and directly in front of half a dozen frightened llamas.

“Stop! Save me!” yelled the lank youth.
“Don’t let them step on me!”

“Keep ’em back with your pistol, Jake—the big pistol!” cried Darry, dryly. He was satisfied that there was no great danger.

“Keep them back! Don’t let ’em crush me!” howled Hockley, in terror. And then he scrambled to his feet and backed out of the flock of llamas with all speed.

In the meantime the owner of the mule and the owner of the llamas had seen the happening, and both rushed to the spot. The mule was readily caught and quieted, and the llamas driven to a distance. Both owners reviled each other for what had occurred, and for several minutes the air resounded with their talk, but the boys did not understand a word, which was perhaps just as well. Then the flock of llamas passed on, and the owner of the mule beckoned to Jake to get up in the saddle once more.

"Is it—it safe?" asked the tall youth, with a nervous glance at the retreating llamas.

The owner of the beast said it was, and very cautiously Jake mounted again. As he did this, Darry winked at Sam, Frank, and Mark, and all had to make an effort to keep from laughing. As it was, Frank gave a snicker that reached Jake's ears and made him turn quickly.

"Who are you laughing at?" he demanded, roughly.

"Nobody," answered Frank.

"Think it's smart to laugh at me, don't you?" cried Jake, in a rage. "I suppose you thought it mighty funny to see me go over the mule's head, eh?"

"Well, it wasn't a very serious proceeding, Jake."

"I might have broken my neck!"

"I am glad you didn't."

"Don't you get gay and laugh at me, Frank Newton! I won't allow it!"

"All right, Jake—just as you say," answered Frank, bound to do all he could to keep the peace.

"Jake is getting sour again," whispered Mark, a few minutes later, when they were on the way

once more. "He stays sweet about so long, and then boils over."

"Well, Mark, I am not going to take too much from him. I like to have 'peace in the family,' as the saying goes, but I can't stand everything."

"None of us are going to stand too much. He has got to behave himself or take the consequences."

"I wish he'd make up his mind to be like the rest of us," said Sam. "If he was, what jolly good times we could have!"

"Well, one good thing about Jake is, he isn't sour as much as he used to be," said Darry. "He only gets an occasional spell. Don't you remember when we first started out, he was sour and dictatorial all the time."

They soon entered the city, and a few minutes' ride through the narrow streets, and across one of the quaint public squares, brought them to the Hotel Guibert, at which they had rooms. Here the boys were glad enough to dismount, and here the owner of the steeds, and the Quichuas, were paid off by Professor Strong.

"I don't think any of us will care to go out to-night," said the professor, when they were entering

their apartments. "We are all too tired, and will enjoy a good night's rest."

"I'd enjoy it more if it wasn't so cold," grumbled Hockley. The fact that none of the rooms in the hotel had any artificial heat annoyed him greatly. In La Paz but few houses are artificially heated, in spite of the fact that the city lies at an altitude of nearly two miles and a half above sea level.

"Well, you'll have to do as the natives do, roll yourself in warm blankets," answered Amos Strong. "Or, I might be able to borrow a charcoal stove for you, if you are suffering very much from the cold, Jacob."

"Oh, I reckon I can stand it if the rest can," answered the lank youth, a bit sheepishly.

A substantial dinner had been ordered, and after a good washing up, and after Sam's bruises had been attended to, they went below to the dining-room. Here they took their time over the meal, there being nothing else to do.

"The steamer sails from Callao for Valparaiso next Wednesday," said Professor Strong, after he had consulted a local newspaper. "We can easily get to Lima by that time, and I can telegraph ahead for staterooms."

"I hope we get good ones," muttered Jake. "No little cubby-hole for mine."

"I'll get the best to be had," responded the tutor, briefly.

Everybody was utterly worn out, and shortly after the meal was finished, Sam and Mark retired to the room they occupied, and presently the others also went to bed. All slept soundly, and it was after eight o'clock before either the professor or any of the lads awoke.

"What's the programme for to-day?" questioned Sam, while the crowd was going to breakfast.

"I was thinking of going down to the market place to get some snapshots of the natives," answered Mark, who loved to take pictures. "Some of the Chola girls are very picturesque, especially those who wear the bright-colored skirts."

"They tell me some of those girls wear ten and twelve skirts at a time," remarked Darry.

"That is true," said Professor Strong. "The native girls here are as proud of their skirts as our own girls are of their hats. Some of them wear a dozen or more at a time, of all hues under the sun, and from time to time they slip off a skirt, as

our ladies would slip off a cape, just to show the gorgeousness of the next one."

"And the shoes!" was Mark's comment. "Did you notice them? All the colors of the rainbow!"

"Yes, and did you notice that some of the poorer natives walked barefooted, carrying those same gorgeous shoes in their hands, so as not to soil them in the mud?" added Sam.

Down in the market place they met a great conglomeration of people, Aymaras, Quichuas, Spaniards, with here and there a European or an American. The market stalls were filled with fruits and vegetables brought in from the fertile valleys beyond the mountains. Those who came to buy were mostly poor people, and the "dickering" went on constantly.

"I am going to buy some fruit," said Hockley, and put his hand in his pocket, to bring out a purse which he usually kept well filled with money. Then he gave a slight gasp.

"What's the matter?" inquired Darry, who was beside him.

"My purse—it is gone!" was the reply. "Somebody has robbed me!"

CHAPTER VII

LOOKING FOR ROBERTO OLANO

“WHAT’S that?” queried Frank, who had overheard only a few words of the talk.

“Jake says he has been robbed—that his purse has been stolen,” answered Darry. “Jake, did you have much in it?” he went on.

“I just guess I did! I had a letter of credit cashed at the bank only three days ago, and most of the money was in the purse—about a hundred and fifty dollars.”

“Did you have the purse when you left the hotel?” asked Mark.

“Sure I did. I looked at it just before we left the dining-room—to make certain that the bank bills were in it. I even counted the bills.”

Professor Strong had gone on, to the other end of the market place, so the five boys were left to themselves in the crowd. Hockley talked in such an excited manner that the market women and

many others gazed at him curiously, wondering what could be the matter.

"Let us take a look around, maybe it dropped on the walk," suggested Darry.

"Oh, I'm not in the habit of dropping my purse!" burst out Jake. "I tell you I have been robbed! I only wish I knew who did it—I'd have him arrested on the spot!" And he glared around at the gathering crowd and along the line of innocent market vendors. Then his glance fell on a Cholo boy who chanced to be standing near, and he caught the lad by the arm. "Did you take my purse?" he almost shouted.

The Cholo boy looked scared, the more so because he did not understand a word of what was said. He stammered something in his native tongue, and tried to free himself.

"I don't believe he is guilty, Jake," said Mark. "Unless you lost the purse, some clever pick-pocket has relieved you of it."

"Say, did anybody at the hotel see you counting that money?" demanded Sam. "If he did, he might have followed you, and brushed up to you in the crowd."

Jake stared at the boy from Boston for a mo-

ment, and then his eyes lit up. He released the Cholo boy, who lost no time in leaving the vicinity of the excited American youth.

"Somebody did see me—a rascally-looking Bolivian, I guess he was. The fellow at the hotel with a cut across his chin. He was sitting on the veranda smoking, and he looked in the window right at me, just as I was putting the money back into the purse. I remember him well, for he gave me a cunning, villainous look. And, come to think of it, when we left the hotel he followed close behind us!"

"Then he may be the guilty fellow," replied Mark. "But I shouldn't accuse him, Jake, until I was certain of what I was doing. Otherwise you may get into serious trouble."

"I'll get right back to the hotel and find out who that fellow is," said the youth who had suffered the loss. "If his reputation isn't good, I'll make a complaint against him and chance it."

Professor Strong had seen the gathering crowd, and now he hurried towards the boys. He was quickly acquainted with what had occurred.

"You had better take a look around here before you return to the hotel," he said. "Possibly that

man is in the crowd—although, if he has the pocket-book, he most likely got away as fast as he could. I will make a few inquiries.”

The professor spoke the native language fluently, and he questioned several of the vendors in that vicinity. At first he learned little of importance, but presently he turned to the boys with a peculiar grim smile on his countenance.

“I am inclined to believe that the man with the cut on his chin is guilty,” he said. “That old woman yonder, who is selling herbs, says she saw such a looking man come up beside Jacob in the crowd and press very close to him, while at the same time his eyes roved around, to see if anybody was noticing him. She says she saw the cut on his chin quite plainly.”

“Then he is guilty!” cried the lank youth, hotly. “It’s as plain as day. He saw me count the money and put it in my purse, and then he followed me, just to watch his chance to get his hands on the purse! I am going right back to the hotel after him!”

“Maybe he didn’t go back,” suggested Frank.

“He was stopping there—for I saw him in the dining-room when we got back from that mountain

trip," put in Mark. "He must have some baggage, and he'd have to go back for that."

"We'll go right back and find out," said Amos Strong. "I am very sorry for you, Jacob," he added, kindly. "After this you must be careful how you show your money before strangers."

"Humph! I didn't think they'd allow crooks to stop at that hotel!" grumbled the lank youth.

"Hotel managers cannot always tell bad men from good, Jacob—they have to take chances. I have warned you of this before. Never trust strangers any more than is necessary."

"Jake always was careless about carrying his money," whispered Frank to Mark, as the crowd hurried back to the hotel. "I warned him about it twice."

"I did the same thing, Frank. The trouble is, Glummy likes to show off. I wager he thought it was big to let that fellow see he had such a roll."

Inside of a quarter of an hour they were back at the hotel. All looked around anxiously for the fellow with a scar on his chin, but that individual was nowhere in sight.

"I will ask about him," said Amos Strong, and proceeded to question not only the clerk, but also

the manager of the hotel, and then several of the servants. From these people it was learned that the man with the scar on his chin was named Roberto Olano. He was a Chilian, and had come from Valparaiso to La Paz on business, so he had said, but what that business was nobody knew. On leaving the hotel but a short while before he had taken his baggage with him, and nobody knew where he had gone.

"This certainly looks very suspicious," was Professor Strong's comment. "We'll have to see if we can't trace him in some way."

"Wouldn't it be a good thing to watch the railroad station at Alto La Paz?" asked Mark. "He may be taking a train to get away."

"More than likely he'd hide right here in the city until he went away," grumbled Jake. "He may have overheard our talk about taking that steamer for Valparaiso."

The young explorers and their tutor talked the matter over for some time, and it was finally decided that Amos Strong and Frank should ride up to the railroad station, while the others searched throughout the city for Roberto Olano. Jake and the three others walked back to the market place,

and then up one street and down another, looking into various business places and eating and drinking resorts. During this journey Mark took a number of snap-shot photographs, and Sam and Darry purchased a few souvenirs. Hockley did nothing but look for the fellow with a scar on his chin, and grew impatient the moment any of the others delayed this search.

"Guess you don't care about my money!" he grumbled once, when the Boston youth stopped to buy some hand-made trinkets for his mother.

"Oh, yes, I do, Jake," answered Sam. "But we can't spend every instant looking for that fellow. I've got my eyes open, the same as you have."

"It's a good thing that chap has the cut on his chin," came from Darry. "He can change his dress, but he can't disguise that very well."

"He might grow a beard over it," suggested Mark.

"I don't think he can, or he'd have a beard already—to hide it. Hair won't grow over some kinds of cuts."

Inside of three hours the boys had tramped from one end of La Paz to the other. They came to a halt at one of the plazas, where there were trees and

shrubbery, and a pretty fountain. In the distance they could see Mount Illimani, the top covered with snow.

"Well, what shall we do next?" asked Sam.

"I must confess I am getting tired," said Darry. "These uneven pavements are hard on a fellow's feet."

All the others looked at Hockley. During the last hour that youth's face had grown more sour each instant.

"Well, you fellows can give up the search if you want to!" he snapped. "I guess you don't care, anyway—it wasn't your money!"

"Now, Jake, don't talk like that," answered Mark, quietly but firmly. "We do care, and you know it. But we simply don't know what to do next. If you can suggest something, I, for one, will do what I can."

"So will I," added Sam and Darry, promptly.

"Darry says he's too footsore to go farther."

"No, I'm not," came quickly from the Western youth. "Just mention something worth doing, and I'll do it."

But Jake could not mention anything, so, after a few words more, all turned in the direction of the

hotel. Here even the boy who had lost his purse was glad to sit down and rest. The hotel manager came up and asked if the purse had been found, and then suggested that he send for the police.

"Wait until Professor Strong and Frank get back," said Jake, after consulting the others.

A little later the others returned from the railroad station at Alto La Paz.

"Did you learn anything?" questioned Jake, eagerly.

"We did," answered Professor Strong. "That man left on a train about two hours and a half ago."

"Where did he go to?"

"That we couldn't find out. In fact, we didn't find out that he was on the train at all until a little while ago. Then we met a stage driver who remembered him."

"Did he go to Lima, do you think?" asked Sam.

"Possibly. But there are plenty of places he could stop at before going that far. For all we know he may have gone only a few miles."

"Didn't you telegraph, or telephone?" asked the lank youth.

"Yes, I sent word ahead," answered Amos Strong. "But I got no reply. I left word, if any reply came, to send it to this hotel."

This was all that could be done, and with it Hockley had to be content. But he grumbled that evening to the other boys, until they were tired of listening to him.

"Jake acts as if he almost thought we were responsible because he can't get his money back," said Darry to his chums. "It makes me tired to hear him."

"It's his own fault," answered Mark. "If he hadn't made a spread of his cash he wouldn't have been robbed. Nevertheless, I am sorry for him, and I hope he gets his money back."

"We all hope that," answered Frank.

The night passed, and also the next day, and no word came in concerning Roberto Olano. The local authorities were consulted, and they promised to institute a search. Then a private detective called on them and asked to see Jake with regard to recovering the lost money.

"I am of a mooch gooda to find de criminal," he said, with a flourish. "You say you employa me I catcha heem for you."

"All right, go and catch him," answered Jake, quickly.

"You paya me first, den I catcha heem," answered the detective, with another flourish, and then, in a rapid-fire talk, he explained how he would go to work to corner Señor Olano, provided Hockley would first, however, advance him the sum—the very small sum—of fifty dollars.

"What! give you fifty dollars!" cried the lank youth, sourly. "Not much! Why, that might be throwing good money after bad. No, I'll not pay you a cent until you catch him."

"But a-fifty dollars, he is only a leetle sum," pleaded the native detective.

"Not a dollar!" cried Jake. "You catch him and then I'll pay you." And then the detective marched off with a much-injured air. It is, perhaps, needless to add that he never did anything on the case, and they never heard of him again.

CHAPTER VIII

DOWN THE COAST OF CHILI

“HURRAH for a life on the ocean wave!”

It was Frank who uttered the words. He was standing on the deck of the coastwise steamer *Pizarro*, in company with Mark and Sam, gazing westward on the boundless Pacific. Darry, Jake, and Professor Strong had gone below, to arrange some things in their staterooms.

The entire party had left La Paz several days before for the seacoast, and had there boarded the vessel which was to take them to Valparaiso. The professor had been fortunate in obtaining first-class accommodations for all, and every lad but Hockley was well satisfied. But as the lank youth was in the habit of finding fault, nobody paid attention to his remarks.

During the time spent on shore Professor Strong had done all in his power to locate Roberto Olano and to get back the purse that had been lost, but

he had been unsuccessful. The man, guilty or innocent, kept himself well hidden, and not a trace of the missing money could be found. Hockley grumbled greatly because of this, and acted as if he thought the others were in some manner responsible, and this at last caused Amos Strong to read the youth a stern lecture.

"You must blame nobody but yourself, Jacob," he said. "You are too careless in handling your funds. I have done all that is possible to get your money back, and the others have done what they could. Now, I want you to find no more fault. In the future, you had better carry only a small amount of cash, and leave the rest in my care."

"Huh! they may rob you as quickly as they did me," grumbled Jake.

"If they do, I'll be responsible, and you won't lose anything," returned the tutor, quickly.

The *Pizarro* was a large steamer, making regular trips between Panama, Callao (the seaport for Lima), Valparaiso, and other ports along the western shore of South America. Travel at that season of the year appeared to be somewhat light, so our friends had plenty of room. The cabin passengers were a mixture of South Americans, English,

Americans, Germans, and Spaniards, while in the steerage were a motley collection of natives, including Indians, and many Chinese.

"The Chinese are creeping into South America, just as they have crept into California and other places on the western coast of the United States," answered Professor Strong, when this subject was mentioned by the boy from Boston. "The authorities here will have to be careful, or sooner or later they will be overrun by the yellow race."

"Well, I thought that Lima had an unusual number of Italians," observed Mark.

"You are right, Mark," answered the tutor. "A certain section of that city—across the Rimic River—is called Little Italy. But Chinese were numerous there, also, as you must have noticed."

"What will be our next stopping-place?" questioned Frank.

"Iquique, located near the northern end of Chili. It is a city of less than twenty thousand inhabitants, but has considerable shipping. During the war between Chili and Peru, in 1879, there was a fierce naval battle in the harbor of Iquique, in which the Chilian man-o'-war *Esmeralda* was sunk by the Peruvian monitor *Huascar*."

"Where will we stop after we leave Iquique?" asked Darry.

"Nowhere, Dartworth, until we reach Valparaiso. If you will consult an atlas you will see that there are numerous other places along the coast of Chili, but they are all small and of little importance, commercially and otherwise."

"Chili is certainly an odd-shaped country," observed Sam. "It's shaped just like a hockey stick, with the lower end at the toe of South America."

"You have hit it exactly," answered the professor, with a smile. "Chili is, roughly speaking, about twenty-five hundred miles long, from north to south, and not much over a hundred miles wide, east to west. The eastern boundary is the range of mountains that divides it from Bolivia and Argentina—the same range that we explored in Peru, when you were fortunate enough to locate that treasure."

"Then, to get into Argentina, we'll have to cross that range again," said Jake, making a wry face. "I was in hope we were through with mountain climbing."

"Oh, don't say that, Jake!" broke in Darry. "It's lots of fun climbing the trails on horseback—"

that is, if there isn't an accident," he added, quickly, thinking of their recent adventure.

"We'll not have to go on horseback unless we wish," answered Amos Strong. "The railroad is nearly open, and one can ride in the cars almost all the way from Valparaiso to Buenos Aires. It was a great feat of railroad engineering to get through the mountain range, but it has been accomplished, and trains are now running regularly on the greater part of the line, although the cars don't go through from one seacoast to the other."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Sam, looking puzzled.

"The tracks are not all of the standard gauge. Some are narrow-gauge—as some of the old lines used to be in the United States—and so at certain points the passengers have to shift from one train to another."

"Well, I'd like to ride on the railroad—but I'd like to ride on horseback, too," said Frank. "That is, if the trail wasn't too narrow."

"We'll see what we'll do after we get there," answered Professor Strong. "For the present let us all try to enjoy this sail down the coast to Valparaiso. It will take this vessel two days to reach

Iquique, and three to four days longer to reach Valparaiso, so you see you have quite a trip ahead."

"I know where I'd like to go when I get to Valparaiso," cried Sam, who had been studying a book of travels. "I'd like to go out to the island of Juan Fernandez. It is only about four hundred miles west of the seaport we are bound for."

"What place is that?" asked Hockley. "What good will it do to go there?"

"Oh, I know that place!" cried Frank. "It's Robinson Crusoe's island!"

"That's it," added the youth from the Hub. "Say, wouldn't it be great to visit Robinson Crusoe's cave, and all that!" he went on, enthusiastically.

"I am afraid you would be very much disappointed if you visited the island," said Professor Strong. "Since Alexander Selkirk, the so-called Robinson Crusoe, lived there, the island has been used at times for a penal colony, and everything is changed. It would not pay you to make the trip, even if you could find a boat going there, which I very much doubt."

It was a clear, balmy day, and the Pacific rolled under the steamer in long, regular swells. Far off

to the eastward could be seen a faint haze that indicated the shore and the mountains behind it; to the westward was the boundless sea, stretching thousands of miles, to New Zealand and Australia.

"What a tremendous old ocean it is!" remarked Frank, as he and Mark walked along the deck.

"Yes, and what a fuss it can kick up in a storm," added his chum.

"Do you think we'll have a storm?"

"I am sure I don't know. It doesn't look like it now. But storms gather pretty quickly on the ocean sometimes."

"Oh, I know that."

"I was wondering if any of us would get seasick."

"Do you want a dose of it?"

"Me? Not much! If I thought I was going to be sick, I'd be for going ashore and walking to Valparaiso!"

"You'd have your hands full—walking a couple of thousand miles!"

A little while later Darry came up to the two boys. His face showed that he had something unusual to tell.

"What do you think!" he cried. "I just met

a man who knows Dan Markel—used to know him in Baltimore.”

“Who is he?” demanded Mark. .

“His name is Paul Radell. He says he used to be in the wholesale grocery business there, but hard times made him give it up. He says he knows all about Markel.”

“Well, we know all we want to about him, too,” was Frank’s grim comment.

“Right you are,” added Mark.

“I had quite a talk with this Mr. Radell,” went on Darry. “At first I thought he was a pretty nice kind of a fellow, but after a while I changed my mind. I rather fancy he is a good deal of a sport.” .

“What is he doing down here?”

“Said he was going down to Argentina to speculate in cattle.”

“If he is going to do that, he must have money,” observed Mark.

“Oh, he seems to have money, but I don’t know how much. Some of those fellows can put up a big bluff,” added the youth from Chicago.

On the following day all the young explorers met Paul Radell and talked to him. He was a stout

man, with deep-set, speculative eyes, surmounted by bushy eyebrows. He was smoking a black cigar, and his breath smelt of liquor.

"It's a great thing for you boys to make a tour of South America," he said, pleasantly. "A great thing. It will open your eyes to the possibilities down here. They tell me a fellow can make money twice as fast down here as he can at home."

"Oh, I don't believe that!" cried Mark. "I think the chances at home are as good as they are anywhere—but one must know what to go at."

"Well, I came down here to get rich," answered the man from Baltimore. "I am going to invest my last dollar in cattle—if I can make the deal I have in mind."

"Mr. Radell, have you heard from Dan Markel lately?" inquired Sam, suddenly.

Paul Radell started, but quickly recovered.

"Why—er—no," he stammered. "You see," he went on, smoothly, "Markel has been away from home now a long time. I haven't had any word from him since he went away."

"Then he doesn't correspond with you?"

"No, since he has been away he seems to have forgotten me entirely."

"Well, you can afford to have him forget you," said Mark, bluntly.

"I understand from this young man"—Paul Radell pointed to Darry—"that he did not treat you fairly. I am sorry to hear that, and I must say I can't understand it. He comes from an excellent family, and was always considered a pretty good sort."

"Well, he has been a rascal since he came down here," added Frank.

"And we could have had him sent to prison, if we had wanted to bother about it," put in Jake. "But those things take time, and we didn't wish to delay our trip."

"Which way are you bound, after you arrive at Valparaiso?" questioned the man from Baltimore.

"We are going to look around Valparaiso and Santiago first, and then strike out across Argentina for Buenos Aires," answered Jake.

"Going by railroad?"

"That isn't decided yet."

"You ought to make part of the trip across the pampas on horseback," said Paul Radell. "A friend of mine was telling me that it is a wonderful

trip—even better than a trip across our own Western prairies.”

“Hurrah! that would suit me down to the ground!” exclaimed Darry, enthusiastically. “My, how a fellow could ride over those pampas, if he had a good horse!”

“I am going out on the pampas on horseback—to look over the cattle situation,” pursued the man from Baltimore. “Perhaps we might ride together part of the distance.”

“So we might,” answered Darry. The fact that Paul Radell loved to ride raised him somewhat in Darry’s estimation.

“Let us talk it over again, before we get to Valparaiso,” said Paul Radell. And then the gong rang for dinner, and the talk came to an end.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE HANDS OF A SHARPER

"I CAN'T say that I like that man Radell," observed Frank to Mark, during the course of the meal. "He tries to make himself agreeable, but there is a look in his eyes I can't altogether trust."

"Just my way of thinking," returned Mark. "And his breath smells too much of liquor to suit me."

"Oh, I don't think he is any better or any worse than hundreds of other fortune hunters," put in Sam, who overheard the talk. "At the same time he isn't exactly the companion I should choose for an outing."

During the following morning they saw Paul Radell and another man playing cards in the smoking-room of the steamer. No money was in evidence, yet Frank and Mark, who looked on through an open window, were satisfied in their minds that the two men were gambling.

"I guess we had better steer clear of him," said Frank to his chum. "He isn't our style."

"I noticed that Jake is growing more friendly with him," returned Mark. "I trust he doesn't try to rope poor Glummy in on one of his gambling games. It would be just like Glummy to fall for it—just as he once fell into Dan Markel's trap."

"Oh, I guess Jake has learned his lesson," answered Frank.

The stop was made at Iquique, a rather uninteresting seaport, and then the steamer turned her prow down the coast towards Valparaiso. The atmosphere was muggy, and all felt that a heavy storm was not far distant.

"We are now bound for the second largest seaport on the Pacific coast," said Professor Strong, as he gathered the young explorers around him on the deck. "As you all know, San Francisco is the largest. I wonder if any of you can tell me what Valparaiso means."

"It means Vale of Paradise," answered Sam, who had been studying his guidebook.

"That is correct."

"If it is the second largest city, it must be quite a place," said Darry.

“Valparaiso numbers close on to a hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. It is built at the foot of some high hills, and contains many squares of fine buildings. The commerce is very large, and this is to be wondered at, since the harbor is a poor one, not to be compared to that at our own Golden Gate. There has been much talk about making the harbor better, but so far little actual work has been done.”

“I understand that all nations have business dealings in Valparaiso,” said Jake.

“That is true, Jacob. There are regular sailings to the United States, and also to England, Germany, and France. Strange as it may seem, I have heard more German spoken in Valparaiso than either Spanish or English.”

“It must be quite a trip from Europe to Valparaiso,” observed Mark.

“By fast steamer the trip is made in five weeks. The ordinary freight steamers take seven or eight weeks. Sailing vessels take several months, all depending on the winds.”

“Somebody told me that Chili was a rather unhealthy place,” said Frank.

“It is, in comparison with some other South American countries,” answered Amos Strong.

"Every once in a while some sort of an epidemic breaks out and carries off a great number of people. They also have terrific storms down here. One such storm, some years ago, destroyed the sea-wall of Valparaiso, and did much damage to the shipping."

"What do they ship?" questioned Jake.

"Wheat, corn, and fruits are handled in large quantities, and also native wines. From the mines come great shipments of copper, sulphur, and nitrates. I was told that last year the value of the nitrates shipped was between forty-five and fifty millions of dollars."

"Great Scott! nitrates must be valuable!" murmured Darry.

"One of the most useful commodities in the world, Dartworth, and used in an endless number of ways. What is obtained in Chili is principally nitrate of soda, and that is used as a fertilizer, and also to obtain nitric acid and saltpeter."

"How do they get the nitrate down to the ships, by muleback?" asked Frank.

"Some may be carried that way, Frank, but most of it is transported by railroads and by overhead tramways. Even though Chili is very narrow, the

country has nearly three thousand miles of railroads, and more building every year. The total area of the country is a little over three hundred thousand square miles, and the population is about three millions."

"Then the country must be pretty well crowded," observed Sam.

"It is more crowded than any State in the United States," answered Professor Strong. "There are not many important cities, but towns and villages are exceedingly numerous."

"It's a republic, isn't it?" questioned Jake.

"Yes, and the capital is Santiago, a city that lies not a great distance from Valparaiso. There are twenty-four provinces, which correspond to our States. They have a president and also a Congress. Chili has had several wars of importance, the greatest being that with Peru and Bolivia, in 1879 to 1883. The national language is Spanish, but, as I mentioned before, in the seaports one hears a perfect babel of tongues."

"I haven't seen very many ships down here flying the Stars and Stripes," said Sam.

"You are right, Samuel, and that fact is much to be regretted. American shipping in these ports

is very slim. Our business men do not seem to realize the golden opportunities that await them here. I trust the next decade will see a change," concluded Professor Strong.

Frank was much interested in the machinery of the steamer, and he and Mark paid a trip to the engine room, where they struck up an acquaintance with the head engineer, a good-natured German. In the meantime, Darry and Sam went to the writing-room, to pen letters to be mailed at Valparaiso, and Professor Strong accompanied them, to write up a diary of their travels. The professor had kept this diary ever since leaving New York, and he hoped some day to use it in writing a regular book of travels, for publication, to be embellished with the photographs taken by himself and the boys.

Hockley was left alone. He did not care for machinery, and he did not want to write or read. He was heartily tired of being on the ship, and he longed for the sights and amusements of some large city.

"This traveling around is getting dead slow," he confided to Paul Radell, when the two chanced to meet near the door of the smoking-cabin.

"Don't like it, eh?" queried the man from Baltimore, and he looked at Jake sharply.

"Oh, it's good enough as far as it goes," was the answer. "But I like something more stirring than just riding on a steamer, or a train, or on horseback. When I started with the bunch I fancied we would visit a lot of big cities and see something that was new and full of life."

"Yes, I know what you mean, Mr. Hockley," answered Paul Radell. "I am that way myself—I hate things that are slow. A merry life every day in the year is my motto. Nothing bad, you understand," he added, hastily, as he saw Jake purse up his lips. "But a good time, that's all. Come on in and have a smoke with me," and as he finished the man from Baltimore drew out his cigar case.

Poor Jake! It was just such a temptation as he could not resist, and, looking around, to make sure that he was not observed, he entered the smoking-cabin and took a cigar. Paul Radell handed him a lighted match; and soon both were puffing away, Hockley doing his best to appear as if smoking were a regular habit with him, although he was a bit dubious about the weed, it looked so black and strong.

In an adroit manner Paul Radell questioned the youth from Pennsylvania regarding the movements of the explorers—where they had been and where they intended to go. He asked who the others were, and if their folks were wealthy.

“Sure, they are all pretty well off,” answered Jake, glibly. “If they weren’t, they couldn’t afford such a trip as this. But none of ’em are as rich as I am,” he added, boastfully.

“How about Professor Strong, is he rich, too?” asked the man.

“Oh, he’s pretty well fixed—owns a big boarding-school, and some stock in a bank, and a land company.”

“Of course you don’t carry much money around with you—it wouldn’t pay you to do that,” observed Paul Radell, as he blew a cloud of smoke to the ceiling.

“We don’t carry a great deal of cash—not over two or three hundred dollars at the most. But we all carry letters of credit.”

“I see—so you can get money whenever you need it. A good idea. I carry ’em myself. But I find it mighty handy to have some cash on hand.”

“I’d have more cash if I hadn’t been cleaned out

in La Paz," said Jake, somewhat bitterly. "But even as it is I've got about fifty dollars. When we get to Valparaiso I'll get more."

"I hope you get that money back, but it will be doubtful," said Paul Radell. He gave a yawn. "Supposing we have a game of cards, just to pass the time?"

Now, Jake had been warned about playing cards, and especially about playing with strangers. But he was out of sorts and reckless, and he readily consented to take a hand. Paul Radell led the way to a far corner of the cabin, where nobody was likely to interrupt them.

It was the old, old story, and I have no desire to go into its details. Although he did not know it, Hockley had unconsciously placed himself in the hands of a sharper—a fellow of the same stripe as Dan Markel. This fellow allowed him to win a game or two and then proposed that they put up a small amount of money on the next game, "just to make it more interesting." This was likewise won by Jake, and then the stakes were increased. Then the lank youth lost, and lost again. He was now highly excited, and on the next game put up all the money that remained in his pocket.

"I hope you win—you deserve it," said Paul Radell, blandly. "But if you lose, don't blame me, Mr. Hockley."

"Who said anything about blaming you?" growled Jake. "Go on and play. I guess I'm sport enough to take what comes."

A few minutes later the game came to an end, and Hockley had lost his money. He had been cheated, but he did not know this. His face blanched a little, and he gave a short gasp.

"Have another game?" asked Paul Radell, coolly.

"I—er—I guess not," stammered Jake.

"Might as well. I'll give you a chance to win back what you have lost."

"I haven't any more cash to put up."

"I'll take your I O U, or you can put up an order on your credit people in Valparaiso."

"I—I guess I'll quit," faltered Hockley. "I've got to—er—write some letters," he continued, and a minute later left the smoking-room. His head was in a whirl, both from the card playing and from the smoking of the cigar, which had proved to be so strong that it was positively sickening.

Left to himself, Paul Radell calmly put away

the cards and the money he had won, lit a fresh cigar, and then strolled out on the deck. As he walked he stroked his chin reflectively.

"I wonder if I could work the scheme?" he mused. "It would be a bigger thing than was ever attempted before. There is no doubt but that the whole crowd is rich. Their dress, and the state-rooms they occupy, show that. I must see Dan as soon as we reach Valparaiso, and see what he thinks of the plan. If we could put it through we'd make a barrel of money out of it, yes, a big barrel of money at that!"

CHAPTER X

A CRASH IN THE STORM

POOR Jake felt very sore because of his loss, but he did not dare to say a word to the other boys or to the professor about the happening.

“I’m cleaned out completely—not a dollar left!” he mused, bitterly. “I hope I don’t have to use any cash before I can get something on my letter of credit. If the occasion does come up—well, I’ll make some excuse—say I left my money in my trunk, or something.”

The wind was increasing, and that evening the sun went down behind a bank of dark-looking clouds. Out on the ocean the whitecaps commenced to show themselves, and the steamer began to labor in the heavy sea as she pursued her course.

“I guess we are in for a spell of dirty weather,” observed Darry, as he walked forward with Mark and Amos Strong.

"It certainly looks that way, Dartworth," responded the professor.

"Are storms dangerous down here?" questioned Mark.

"A storm at sea is always more or less dangerous, Mark. But these steamers are all well built, and I do not look for trouble. But the extra pitching of the vessel may make some of us seasick."

Directly after the evening meal all of the young explorers went on deck again. By this time the wind was blowing at a furious rate, and the swells of the Pacific were mounting higher and higher.

"It's coming right enough," observed Frank. "Gracious! just listen to that gale whistling overhead!"

"I suppose we'll be ordered to stay inside soon," said Mark, and he was right; the order came but a few minutes later. The sea was now dashing wildly against the side of the steamer and occasionally a wave, higher than the others, would send the spray flying clear across the deck.

"It's queer it doesn't rain," observed Darry, as he watched the angry ocean through one of the cabin windows.

"Very little rain falls in this portion of the

globe," answered Professor Strong. "In some parts of Chili the total rainfall during a year is practically nothing. Were it not for the dews and mists, all the vegetation would be burned up."

"I—I guess I'll go to bed," said Jake, with some hesitation.

"Why, it's early yet," returned Sam, consulting his watch.

"Well, I'm tired out, and besides, I've got a little headache," went on the lank youth, and then lost no time in disappearing in the direction of his state-room.

"I shouldn't wonder if Jake were seasick," whispered Frank to Mark.

"He certainly looked that way around the mouth," was the reply. "If he is, I'm sorry for him."

What Frank had surmised was correct. The smoking of the strong cigar and the pitching of the vessel had proved too much for the lad from Pennsylvania. His head was in a whirl, and his stomach seemed to be "turning inside out," and it was all he could do to get to his stateroom.

"Oh, why did I come on this miserable trip!" he groaned, as he threw himself down on his berth.

"I'd give a thousand dollars to be back in the States again! No more South American trips for me!" And then he rolled over and over, groaning dismally.

"I don't think we'll get much sleep to-night," observed Sam, as, some time later, the other boys sought their staterooms. "This ship is rolling like a tub!"

"We'll have to strap ourselves in our berths, to keep from pitching out," returned Darry with a grin.

"I trust none of you feel seasick," remarked Amos Strong, as he smiled faintly.

"I'm all right," answered Frank.

"So am I," added Mark.

"I feel just a bit queer," replied Sam. "I think I'll be all right when I lie down."

"That's me, too," put in Darry. "This old ship is worse than a galloping horse on a rough trail!"

"But this storm isn't as bad as that blizzard on the mountain," said Frank, quickly.

"Wait—it isn't over yet," chimed in Sam.

"Oh, don't croak!" cried the others, in a chorus.

"I think I'll go and see Jacob before I retire," said Professor Strong, and made his way along the

rolling passageway until he reached the door to Hockley's stateroom. He knocked several times before there was any response.

"What's wanted?" asked Jake, at last, in surly tones.

"It is I, Mr. Strong. Can I do anything for you, Jacob?" asked the tutor, kindly.

"No, sir."

"Are you sick?"

"A little—not much."

"I am sorry to hear it. If you get worse, let me know." And then, as there was no reply, Amos Strong walked away and entered his own stateroom.

Mark and Frank had a room directly opposite to that occupied by Hockley, and next to them were Sam and Darry. All of the boys were soon undressed, and, after saying their prayers, they proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as possible.

"This night is going to be a corker, and no mistake!" was Mark's comment as he lay down. "Just listen to that!" he added, as a big wave hit the side of the steamer with a bang.

"I'm thankful we are not out in a sailboat," an-

swered Frank. "A rocky coast like this must be highly dangerous."

"Oh, I reckon the captain knows enough to stand out in deep water, Frank. It would be foolhardy to stand in close in such a blow as this."

"I wonder if this will delay us."

"Not very much, I guess. This steamer has powerful engines."

"But the pounding of the sea might break the rudder or the screw."

"Let us hope not. Good-night," and then both boys turned over and tried to lose themselves in slumber.

On and on labored the steamer, now on the crest of a gigantic wave, and anon deep in the trough of the sea. The night was pitch black, not a single star showing in the firmament. The regulation lights shone but dimly through the flying spray, and an extra lookout was kept at the bow, to report any danger.

After tossing around for an hour or more, all the young explorers fell asleep, and Professor Strong also rested in slumber. The tutor was such a confirmed traveler that the war of the elements did not disturb him in the least.

Suddenly from out of the darkness came a wild yell of alarm, almost drowned out by the roaring of the wind. Then came the sight of several lights, off the port bow. Orders were at once given to reverse the engines, and the pilot did all he could to steer to starboard.

But these movements were next to useless, for the other vessel, a big lumber schooner, loaded deeply with timber, was too close. There was a crash, followed presently by another, that shook the steamer from stem to stern.

At the first crash Mark and Frank were awakened; at the second each lad was hurled from his berth to the floor. Frank came down first, and his chum landed across him.

"Wha-what is it?" gasped Mark, when he could speak.

"Get off of me!" spluttered Frank. "Yo-you are smashing m-my ribs!"

Mark tried to regain his feet. Hardly had he done so when there came a third crash, and he went down again, and this time it was Frank who rolled on top. Then the light went out, leaving them in total darkness.

It was enough to alarm anybody, and the boys



EACH LAD WAS HURLED FROM HIS BERTH TO THE FLOOR.—Page 106.

were thoroughly frightened. Both got up as quickly as they could, and each caught the other by the arm.

“What’s the matter?”

“We’ve struck something!”

“Do you think we’ll sink?”

“Let us get out of here!”

Fortunately both remembered the location of the stateroom door, and, hand in hand, they made their way towards it. As they came out into the passageway they heard loud cries, the clanging of bells, and the blowing of a whistle.

“Save me! Save me!” came in a mad yell, and Hockley appeared from his stateroom. “Save me! I don’t want to drown!”

“Is that you, Jake?” called out Mark, and just as he spoke the electric lights lit up again, so that the boys could see one another.

“Yes! yes! Is the boat sinking? Will we be drowned? Come ahead on deck! Maybe we’ll have to get into one of the small boats!” gasped Hockley. He was as white as a sheet and trembling so that his teeth chattered.

Other stateroom doors were opening, and Sam and Darry and the professor appeared, and so did

other passengers, clad in their night garments, and some of them carrying other wearing apparel and hand baggage. Among the number was Paul Radell, and his manner showed that he was as badly scared as Hockley.

"Are we going down?" he demanded, clutching Professor Strong wildly by the arm.

"I do not know, but I hope not," was the reply, and then Amos Strong pushed the sharper to one side. "Let us go on deck," he added, to the boys. "Perhaps the danger is over."

"But what do you think was the matter?" asked Hockley.

"We struck something—another ship most likely."

Keeping close together, the boys and the tutor, along with a number of others, hurried to the deck of the steamer. The wind was still blowing a gale, and the spray was flying in all directions. The captain was on deck, and was issuing orders with great rapidity.

"Be careful, that none of you fall overboard!" called out Amos Strong, to make himself heard above the roaring of the wind. "Better keep close together!"

"Are we sinking?" gasped Jake. "Oh, don't tell me that we are going down!"

"Stay here and I will try to find out just what happened," answered the tutor.

It was no easy matter, amid such confusion, to learn just what had occurred. But at last it was made plain to everybody that the other craft had rammed the steamer on the port side, about twenty feet back from the bow. A dozen feet of the rail had been carried away and also a portion of one of the cabins, and there was a small hole in the side, above the water line.

"Then we are in no danger of sinking?" inquired Amos Strong of one of the under officers.

"Not the slightest," was the ready reply. "Please tell the other passengers that there is no danger." And word was passed around as rapidly as possible. Then the passengers were told to go back into the cabins or their staterooms, for the wind was causing the steamer to toss and pitch as greatly as ever.

"Was anybody hurt?" asked Sam, after the worst of the excitement was over.

"One deckhand and one passenger," answered a man standing near. "None of the injuries are serious."

"What of the vessel we struck, or that struck us?" questioned Mark.

"I don't know anything about her."

"If we are in no danger of going down, we'll have to stand by the other ship, to give assistance, if necessary," said Professor Strong. "It is too bad that it is so dark."

He had hardly spoken when a colored light flared up on the bow of the steamer. It lit up the scene for a considerable distance, so that the lumber schooner could be seen distinctly.

CHAPTER XI

A DISCOVERY IN VALPARAISO

“ SHE seems to be safe! ”

“ Yes, but she may be taking in water rapidly. ”

“ The steamer will have to stand by to take off her crew if she is in any danger. ”

Such were some of the remarks passed while the colored light lit up the scene. Soon it went out, leaving the darkness as intense as before.

The lumber schooner had displayed no signal of distress, and that was taken as a good sign. Presently another colored light flared up, and then the schooner and the steamer came a little closer.

“ Ahoy the schooner! ” was the cry from the captain of the steamer, in Spanish.

“ What d’ye mean by running into us? ” snarled a deep bass voice, in English.

“ Any danger of going down? ” was the next question asked, also in Spanish.

"No, but you smashed up our bow some. Are you all right?"

"We have some damage, but nothing dangerous," answered the captain of the steamer. "What schooner is that?"

"The *Rosemary*, bound for Valparaiso. What steamer is that?"

"The *Pizarro*, also bound for Valparaiso."

"Then we'll see you later, and collect damages," growled the heavy voice, in English.

"It is we who will collect damages," answered the captain of the steamer, in Spanish. And then the two vessels drifted apart in the darkness, and the *Pizarro* proceeded once more on her way.

"There is a promise of a lawsuit," observed Mark, when he heard of the talk that had taken place. "Who is guilty, Professor?"

"I am sure I do not know, Mark. The steamer had her lights lit and a lookout on guard. Whether the schooner was showing the proper lights or not remains to be found out. If she was, I suppose they will put it down as due to the storm, with nobody to blame."

Assured that there was no danger of sinking, the passengers commenced to retire again. With

them went the boys, including Jake. The lank youth had been completely frightened out of his seasickness, but although he felt better he was as sour as ever.

"The captain of this boat ought to be locked up for such a smash," he growled. "Why, we might all have been drowned! It's gross carelessness, that's what it is!"

"I think the storm was to blame," returned Darry.

"Humph! A big steamer like this can easily weather such a blow. It was rank carelessness, I tell you!" went on Jake, and then he shuffled off to his stateroom.

"Glummy makes me weary in the bones!" declared Sam, as he and Darry turned in. "I thought he was going to turn over a new leaf, but he seems to be as bad as ever."

"I guess it isn't in him to turn over a new leaf—at least, not yet," answered the Western boy in a disgusted tone.

By morning the storm had blown itself out, and before noon the sun shone as brightly as ever. Now that all danger was past, the passengers were inclined to laugh over the fact that the shock of the

collision had thrown many of them out of their berths.

"Oh, I thought it couldn't be much," said Paul Radell, in an off-hand manner, as he lit a fresh cigar. "These steamers are very strongly built, you know."

"Well, it was a pretty bad smash," answered Mark. "I want no more of them."

"Have you made up your mind where you are going to stop when you get to Valparaiso?" questioned the sharper, curiously.

"I don't know the name of the hotel. We leave those things to Professor Strong."

"The Strand is a good English hotel, so I've been told."

"Perhaps we'll stop there. You might ask Professor Strong." And Mark turned away, for Paul Radell's manner was not to his liking. A little later he saw the sharper in conversation with Hockley.

The remainder of the run to Valparaiso was made without mishap, and about the middle of one afternoon they ran into the harbor. All the passengers, including the young explorers, crowded on the deck to see the sights.

"My! what a lot of shipping!" was Sam's comment, as he gazed at the many vessels at the docks and in the roadstead.

"And look at the flags!" added Mark. "Nearly every flag under the sun! There are German, French, and English, and over yonder is a Spanish steamer, and a Japanese sailing vessel."

"Yes, and here comes a Dutch freighter, bound, I suppose, for Holland, and just back of her is a bark flying Old Glory, the best flag of all!"

"It assuredly is a conglomeration of nations," said Frank. "What flag is that?" and he pointed to one on a small warship lying at anchor.

"That's the flag of Chili," answered Professor Strong. "And the flag on the low-lying ship to the left is that of Argentina. Yes, it certainly is a conglomeration, as you say. I am only sorry for one thing, boys."

"That Old Glory isn't better represented?" put in Darry, quickly.

"That's it. Our foreign shipping is not what it should be. We are allowing foreign ships to carry cargoes that should be carried in our own bottoms."

An hour later found them ashore. Their baggage had been inspected and passed, and was

sent to a hotel the professor had selected, not the one mentioned by Paul Radell, but a newer affair, which had been recommended by a merchant-friend in Lima. The young explorers and their tutor were driven to the hostelry in a carriage which was as fine as any they could have engaged in New York.

"Part of this city looks rather old," remarked Frank, as they rode along.

"Valparaiso consists really of two towns," answered Professor Strong. "The old town was called Puerto and the new Almendral. The place dates back to 1544. It was taken by Admiral Drake in 1578, and by Sir Richard Hawkins in 1594. Then, in 1600, some Dutch pirates came along and took possession."

"Dutch pirates!" exclaimed Hockley. "Are there pirates down here?"

"Not now, Jacob. That happened three hundred years ago. Since that time Valparaiso has been the scene of several bombardments and insurrections, and has been visited by numerous fires and earthquakes. One earthquake was so severe that it ruined many beautiful buildings."

"I don't want to be here when they have an earthquake," returned the lank youth. "We've had

enough earthquakes and volcanic eruptions already."

"All right, Jake, we'll have the earthquakes chained up while you are here," remarked Darry, dryly.

"Huh! you needn't poke fun at me!" grumbled Hockley. "You'd be scared yourself, if a big earthquake hit us."

"I reckon we'd all be scared," said Frank. "Don't talk about it."

"I don't look for any earthquakes," said Amos Strong. "They are not so frequent as all that."

As they rode along, the young explorers could readily see that Valparaiso was a busy place. The shipping was immense, and many of the numerous stores seemed to be doing a thriving business. Signs in Spanish predominated, but there were also many in English and in German.

"The English signs make a fellow feel a little at home," was Sam's comment. "I'd hate to get in a country where they didn't speak a word of United States."

"Well, they are just as up-to-date here as anywhere," said Mark. "Electric lights, telephones, trolley cars, and all."

"And back on the next square I saw a window full of typewriters and talking machines," added Frank.

"And there is the advertisement of a moving picture show," said Darry. "What more could a fellow want than that?" And this remark caused a general laugh.

The hotel was located at the end of a public square, where there was a tiny park. It was a roomy, comfortable place, with a courtyard in the center, used in warm weather for dining purposes. The whole party had adjoining rooms on the second floor.

"Did you notice the help?" remarked Frank, to his chums, while getting ready to dine. "Some are natives, some English, and a few of them French and German."

"I guess they cater to all nationalities," was Sam's reply, and the youth from the Hub was right. When they entered the dining-hall they were assigned to a table at one end, over which an English waiter presided. More than this, the waiter brought them a bill of fare written out in English and French, so that the boys had no difficulty in ordering what they wanted.

"I wonder what became of that Paul Radell," said Mark, during the progress of the meal.

"I saw him get into a carriage right after we drove off," answered Sam. "But I don't know where he went."

"His carriage followed ours," said Jake. "When we stopped here he looked in at us and then went on."

"Perhaps that Strand Hotel is near here," suggested Darry.

"No, the Strand is on the other side of the city," answered Amos Strong.

"You don't suppose he was following us, do you?" asked Hockley, quickly.

"Why should he follow us?" demanded Sam.

"I'm sure I don't know—I was only wondering if it could be so."

"I didn't like that chap at all," said Mark. "Perhaps I am doing him an injustice, but he struck me as being of the same stripe as Dan Markel."

"That's the way I sized him up, too," returned Frank.

"There are a great many such fellows in this world," said Amos Strong. "They wander around from one country to another, always in the hope

that they are going to make money easily—strike some soft snap. Some of them are pretty shrewd, but often they overreach themselves, as was the case with Markel.”

“I wonder if Markel will bob up again?” mused Darry.

“If he bothers us again we ought to have him locked up,” burst out Frank. “I am sick of being tormented by such a rascal.”

“I guess we are all sick of him,” said Mark.

“By the way, while we are in Valparaiso, I want to get some money,” said Jake. As he spoke, he felt his face growing red, thinking of how he had allowed Paul Radell to get his money away from him.

“More money, Jake? Say, you must have spent a lot on shipboard!” observed Darry.

“Oh, I—er—spent some for souvenirs before we sailed,” stammered the lank youth.

“We can all go to the bankers in the morning,” answered Professor Strong. “After that we can visit the principal places of interest in Valparaiso, and then make arrangements to visit Santiago, the capital.”

“How far is that?” questioned Frank.

"About seventy-five miles. We can go there by train."

"Is Santiago much of a place?" asked Darry.

"Yes, it is about one-third larger than Valparaiso, and, being the capital of the country, it has many beautiful buildings, including a university and a library, as well as the government structures."

The whole party took time in eating, and then walked into the reading-room of the hotel, to look over the newspapers, especially such as were printed in English. *The Shipping Register* and the *Valparaiso News* interested them, although they saw no news that concerned any of their number.

Presently Darry tired of the papers and walked around the hotel, to where a side veranda overlooked an alleyway. Here it was almost dark, and nobody was present but an old German, who was dozing away in a wicker chair.

Darry walked to the end of the veranda and stood looking out into the darkness beyond. As he stood there he heard a murmur of voices. Then came the slight crack of a safety match and his attention was attracted by a tiny flare of light. A man standing out in the alleyway was lighting a cigar.

As Darry looked, he recognized Paul Radell. Beside Radell stood another man, talking earnestly. Just as the match went out Darry recognized the second individual. It was Dan Markel.

CHAPTER XII

WAS IT A PLOT?

DARRY was considerably surprised, and not without reason. Radell had mentioned Markel several times, but the youth had not expected to see the two men together and so soon. Evidently Radell had sought Markel out immediately upon landing.

"I wonder if it is possible that they are in league with each other?" mused the Western lad. "It looks like it, from the earnest way in which they are discussing something."

Darry wanted to call some of the others, but he was afraid that, if he walked back to where they were, the men might disappear in the darkness. Both men were smoking, and the lights from their cigars glowed like fireflies in the darkness.

The Western boy was naturally brave, and without stopping to think twice he made his way to the end of the veranda, climbed over the railing, and dropped to the yard below. Then with caution he

moved along the side of the alleyway to where Markel and Radell were talking as earnestly as ever.

"Of course, if we could do it, it would be a big thing," he heard Dan Markel say, as he drew closer. "I know they are all wealthy."

"I don't see why it can't be done," returned Paul Radell. "It has been done before. I imagine you read about that Gilbert affair. That crowd got thirty thousand dollars."

"Yes, so I heard. But this would be different. You would have to get——"

Dan Markel broke off short, for just then a man carrying a lantern came into the alleyway. He marched up to the two men and eyed them suspiciously.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, in Spanish.

"Oh, we only came here to talk," answered Paul Radell.

"Very well," answered the newcomer. "But I must clean the alley." And he set down his lantern. He had not seen Darry, and the boy moved back into the shadow of a doorway.

"Come, we'll find another place," said Radell to

Markel. "And then we'll get down to details." And with this both men walked rapidly away. Darry wanted to follow them, but they disappeared around a corner, and were swallowed up in a crowd.

"Those fellows are up to some scheme," thought the Western youth, as he went back into the hotel. "I wonder what it is?"

When he rejoined the others, he told them of what had happened. All listened with interest to what he had to say.

"I believe that Paul Radell and Dan Markel are tarred with the same stick!" cried Frank. "We had better keep our eyes open for both of 'em."

"Does anybody know what they meant by speaking of the Gilbert affair?" questioned Mark.

"I never heard of it," answered Jake, after a pause.

"I think I know what they referred to," answered Professor Strong, gravely. "An Englishman named Gilbert, a very rich nobleman, was traveling some time ago in Peru, when he was made a prisoner by some mountain brigands. They demanded a heavy ransom, and some of the newspapers stated that his relatives paid thirty thousand dollars for his release."

“Do you think Radell and Markel would go into any such scheme as that?” demanded Sam.

“I do not know what to think, Samuel. I know that Markel is a rascal of the first water, and I am inclined to believe that Radell is no better.”

“Whom can they be plotting against?” asked Frank.

“Maybe they are plotting against us!” cried Mark. “You know how Markel threatened us, in that letter he wrote.”

“I believe they are plotting against us!” exclaimed Hockley, and as he spoke his face grew pale. “Yes, I am almost sure of it!” he added, after a moment’s thought.

“What makes you sure?” questioned the tutor, quickly.

“I’ll tell you. You remember how friendly that Paul Radell was on the steamer? Well, he asked me a lot of questions about our crowd—where we were from, and where we intended to go—and he said we must have money, to be sporting around in this fashion.”

“What did you tell him?” asked Frank. “Come, tell us everything, Jake; this is important.”

“Why, I—er—told him we all had money—that

is, that our folks were rich. I didn't want him to think we were poor."

"And I suppose you bragged a little, too," added Darry, rather bitterly.

"No, I didn't brag. But I told the truth—that all of us could get all the money we needed at any time."

"That was enough," put in Mark. "Ten to one they are plotting to make money out of us."

"What, by making us prisoners?" cried Sam. "They would have a job doing that with the six of us."

"Maybe they are planning to carry Jake off alone," said Darry, mischievously. "He's the richest fellow in the crowd."

At these words poor Jake grew paler than before. Only too well he remembered how he had bragged to Paul Radell about the wealth of his father. Now he wished he had not done it.

"I—I won't give 'em the chance," he muttered. "If they try to lay their hands on me they'll get hurt."

"I think I'll look into this," said Amos Strong. "I'll try to locate Markel and Radell in the morning. And, boys, when you go out after this, keep

together, and don't give these men, or any outsiders, any chance to play any tricks on you."

After that there was a long discussion, but nothing came of it, and, a little later, the crowd retired. Professor Strong did not have much to say, but he was greatly worried—in fact, more so than Hockley. The boys were under his care, and he felt that he must do all in his power to keep them from harm. He knew many of the particulars of the Gilbert affair—how the Englishman had been enticed to visit a mountain resort, and then made a prisoner and carried off to a pass where the authorities could not locate him, and how he had been threatened with torture and even death if the money his captors demanded was not forthcoming.

"Markel and Radell have heard all about that affair, and it has set them to hatching out some plot of their own," reasoned the tutor. "Markel is angry enough at us to try almost anything, and Radell most likely got Jacob to tell him all about our crowd, and our plans, and just how wealthy Mr. Hockley and all the others are. The question is, whether Markel and this Radell have nerve enough to try anything really desperate. It's a long trip from Valparaiso to Buenos Aires, especially if we

make part of the journey across the pampas on horseback. Perhaps, after all, we had better travel mostly by train—that is, if I can't round up those two men before we leave here."

Early in the morning Amos Strong called a carriage and was driven over to the Strand Hotel.

"Is there a man stopping here by the name of Paul Radell?" he asked.

The clerk looked over the register, and then shook his head.

"No such party here," he said.

"Is there a man here named Dan Markel?"

"Not now. Mr. Markel stopped here last week for a few days."

"Do you know where he went to?"

"No, sir."

This was all Professor Strong could learn, and he returned to his own hotel. Here he got the names of all the other hotels in Valparaiso, and called them up, one after the other, on the telephone. At first he could find no trace of either Markel or Radell, but at last located the pair at a place called The Golden Crown.

"What sort of a hotel is The Golden Crown?" he asked of a merchant whom he had met the even-

ing before—a rich gentleman who had lived in the seaport for several years.

“The Golden Crown?” repeated the merchant. “It isn’t a hotel you would want to stop at with your boys.”

“Not a very nice place?”

“It is nice so far as outward appearances go. But some rather shady characters stop there, and there is a good deal of drinking and gambling.”

Amos Strong asked no more questions, but went in to breakfast, being joined in the dining-hall by the boys. Hockley was the last down, and his eyes showed that he had slept but little. Truth to tell, the lank youth had had a fearful nightmare, in which he had dreamed that he was being carried off to sea by Radell, Markel, and some others, who proposed to bury him alive on Robinson Crusoe’s island.

“I have a little private business to attend to,” said the tutor, when the meal was nearly over. “I think you had better remain around the hotel until I get back.”

“I was going to the bankers after that money,” said Hockley. “Don’t you think it would be all right, if one or two of the others went with me?”

“Oh, I guess you can go as far as that, Jacob.

But be careful and don't go into any out-of-the-way places."

"Who wants to go along?" asked the lank youth, looking at the others.

"I'll go," answered Frank, when none of the others spoke. He hated to see Jake left out in the cold, even though he did not care much for the big youth.

"I'll go along, too, if you want me," added Mark, who always liked to be with his old chum.

"All right, come ahead," said Hockley.

"What will you two do?" asked Frank, turning to Sam and Darry.

"I'm going to study the guidebooks, to find out what I am going to see," answered the boy from Boston.

"I'll do the same—until you fellows come back," put in Darry.

Hockley had the address of the bankers in his pocket, and was told by the hotel clerk where the banking-house was located. It was quite a distance, but the three lads decided to walk. In the meanwhile Professor Strong hurried off in a carriage, to see if he could locate Markel and Radell. He had determined to learn, if possible, what those men in-

tended to do, and, if it was anything underhanded, stop them, even if he had to have them arrested on suspicion.

As the three boys walked along one thoroughfare after another of the seaport, they were much interested in the sights to be seen. Both on the streets and in the shops all nationalities were represented.

"It certainly is a cosmopolitan city and no mistake," observed Mark.

"Look at the bird store!" cried Frank, and stopped at the place. "Did you ever see so many different kinds of birds!"

"And look at the parrots!" exclaimed Jake.

"Puts me in mind of those we saw along the Orinoco and the Amazon," came from Frank.

"These folks certainly have some elegant pottery ware," observed Mark, as they stopped at the next shop, where some beautiful pots and vases were on exhibition.

"They aren't anything to that urn from which Darry and I got that treasure!" cried Frank. "My, but that was a beautiful urn, if ever there was one!"

"I reckon the contents made it beautiful," an-

swered Jake, with a little sigh. He could not help but remember how his own treasure hunt had come to naught.

The banking-house was presently reached, and the three boys entered the office. Here several men were present, and the lads had to wait their turn to be served.

“Now what can I do for you?” asked a clerk at last, and turned to Hockley.

“Why, I want to get some——” began the lank youth, and then his gaze chanced to turn toward a big window opening on a side street. He gave a start. “Hello, there is that fellow now!” he cried. “How did he get here? I must catch him!” And turning on his heel, he started from the banking-house on a run.

CHAPTER XIII

SOMETHING ABOUT A WONDERFUL RAILROAD

FRANK and Mark were waiting on a settee in a corner, and they did not notice Jake's hasty departure from the bank until he was on the outside steps. Then both sprang up simultaneously.

"There goes Jake!"

"What is he after?"

"I don't know, but he is in a mighty hurry."

"Come on after him, Frank. Something is wrong, I am sure."

"I don't believe he has his money yet."

"Neither do I. He wasn't at the counter more than a second."

Thus speaking, both boys left the banking building and hurried out on the pavement. Here a crowd was passing, and for the moment they could see nothing of Hockley. Then they caught sight of a figure just vanishing around a corner.

"There he goes, Mark!"

"I saw him. He must be after somebody. Wonder who it can be?"

"Markel maybe, or Radell."

"We had better go after him."

"Sure."

Both boys broke into a run, and darted around the corner after Hockley. Then came a chase of several blocks.

"Look! look!" cried Frank, suddenly. "Oh dear, there is more trouble! If that isn't the worst yet!"

They had come up until they were less than a hundred feet behind Jake. At this point the thoroughfare was rather narrow, and the shopkeepers had many articles of merchandise piled on the sidewalks. From out of one of the shops had come a man bearing on his head a flat tray on which rested a variety of plaster-of-paris images. Hockley had run full tilt into this vendor, hurling him on his back and scattering the images in all directions with disastrous results.

When Frank and Mark reached the spot, Jake, who had sprawled on top of the image vendor, was picking himself up. On all sides lay the white casts, many of them broken to bits. As soon as the lank youth arose the vendor did likewise. He

was not much hurt, and his first thought was for his demolished stock in trade.

"You kill me! You ruin me! I am a poor man!" he bawled, in his native tongue. "Oh, that I should live to see such destruction! Never more can I sell those beautiful statues! They are crushed forever, and so my heart is crushed also! Oh, wretch that you are! A thousand years in prison would not be too many for you! You shall be hung for this, yes, hung!" And then in a frenzy he caught Hockley by the arm and the throat.

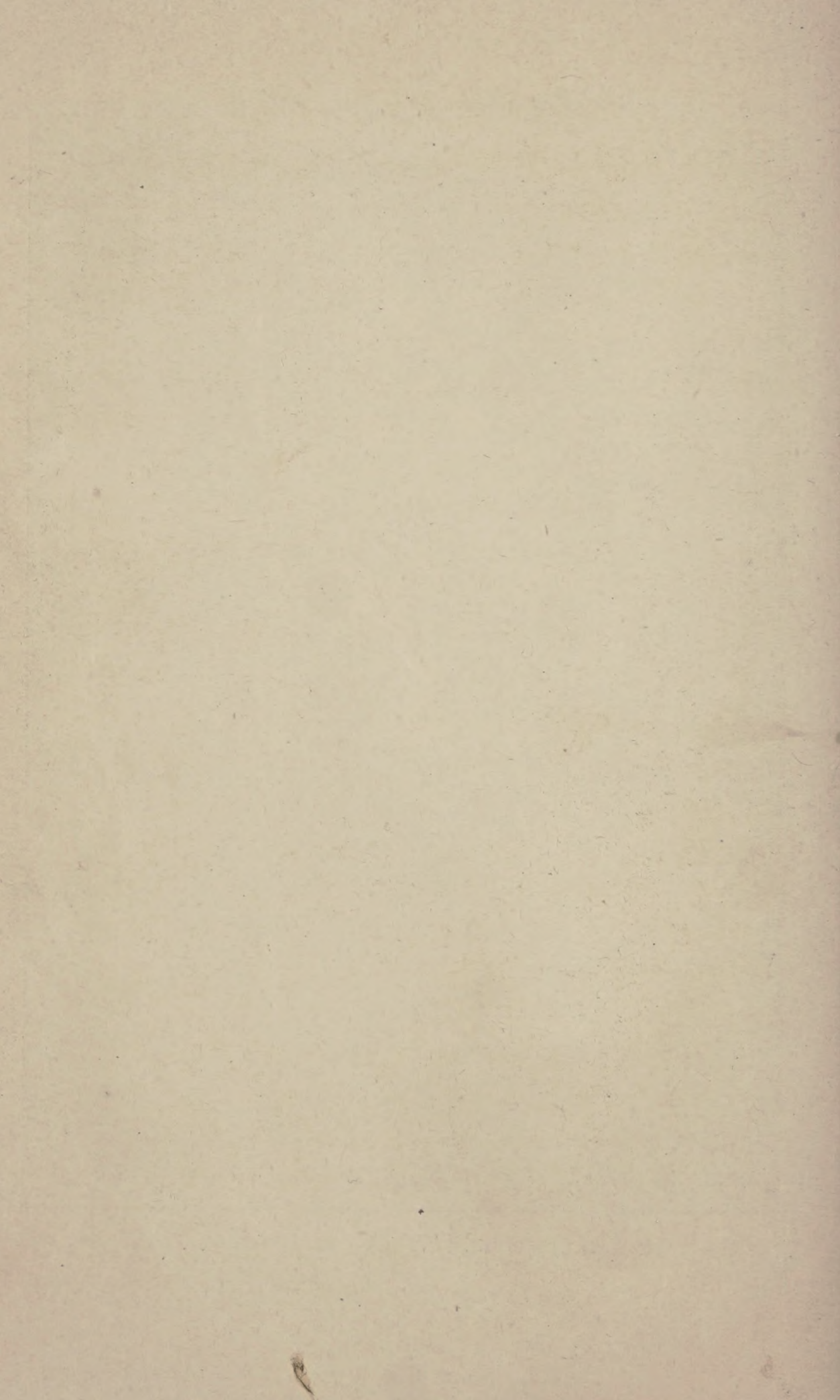
"Hi! hi! le-let go!" spluttered the unfortunate boy. "Don't cho-choke me-me! I didn't mean to smash your images." And he did his best to shake the man off.

"You shall pay me! Every dollar shall be paid!" bawled the vendor. "Call the police! I will have this villain arrested! Oh, that such ruin should come to such an innocent man like me!" And now his face took on a woebegone look as he gazed at the destruction around him.

"Don't call the police—I'll pay you," said Hockley, growing scared. "It was an accident," and then he spoke to the man in the best Spanish he could command, and presently the fellow calmed



HOCKLEY HAD RUN FULL TILT INTO THIS VENDOR.—*Page 135.*



down a little. But he insisted upon it that Hockley had ruined him and that never again could he make such beautiful statues as had been broken.

"Don't you believe him," put in Mark. "These fellows make those images in molds, and turn 'em out by the hundreds. They sell 'em from ten cents up. There are some in the window now, marked ten cents to a dollar." And he pointed to the window of the shop from which the traveling vendor had come. Sure enough, the statues were there, with prices plainly marked on each.

This was lucky for Hockley, for the fellow at first demanded ten times as much as what the broken pieces were worth. But when he saw that the tall youth, backed up by his chums, did not intend to be intimidated, his demands became more reasonable, and in the end he named a sum that was only a little above actual value.

"Might as well let him have it, Jake," said Mark. "Remember, you knocked him flat. That's worth something."

"I suppose it is," grumbled the lank youth. "All right, I'll pay him. But—er—I haven't got the money. I didn't have a chance to get it from the bank. Can you lend me some?"

"Certainly," answered Mark, and Frank said the same, and between them the vendor was paid off. Each of the boys took along a little image, as a memento of the affair.

"What caused you to start on such a run?" asked Frank, as they turned back in the direction of the banking-house.

"Oh, I didn't tell you, did I?" cried Jake. "I was after that fellow who cleaned me out in La Paz, the fellow they said was named Roberto Olano."

"The man with the scar on his chin?" cried Mark.

"That's the chap. Just as I was going to ask for my money at the banking-house I chanced to look out of a window and I saw that fellow passing. I ran out to stop him, but when he saw me he took to his legs and beat it for all he was worth. I went after him—and you know the rest."

"Are you sure it was Olano?" queried Mark.

"Oh, yes, I saw that scar. Besides, as soon as he caught sight of me he ran. He wouldn't do that, if he wasn't Olano."

"And if he wasn't guilty," added Frank.

"Maybe we had better try to follow him," sug-

gested Mark. "Although he must be a good distance away by this time."

"It's no use, he'll hide," answered Hockley. "No, I'll let him drop for the present. But I am going to keep my eyes open for him as long as we are in Valparaiso," he added.

The three lads were soon at the banking-house again, and Hockley had little difficulty in obtaining the cash he wanted.

"Better put it in an inside pocket," suggested Mark, after he and Frank had been paid back the money they had advanced.

"Oh, nobody will get this, don't fear," answered the lank youth, boastfully. Nevertheless, he placed the larger portion of the cash in the inside pocket of his coat, securing it with a safety pin.

"It would seem that all of our enemies are at present in Valparaiso," was Frank's comment, as they walked in the direction of the hotel. "I wish we could round 'em all up and get clear of them for good and all."

"We'll round 'em up some day," answered Mark. "Evildoers invariably reach the end of their rope sooner or later."

"I don't think this Roberto Olano has anything

to do with Markel or Radell," said Jake. "More than likely he doesn't even know them."

"Well, you can't always tell," returned Frank. "You know the old saying about birds of a feather flocking together. If Olano is a crook he may be in with other crooks. Those fellows often work hand in hand."

Arriving at the hotel, the three boys found Sam and Darry in the reading-room, poring over some magazines. They listened with interest to what the others had to relate.

"What a pity you didn't capture the scar-faced rascal!" murmured the Western youth. "Maybe you might have gotten your money back."

"If Olano hasn't spent it," put in Sam. "That sort of chap usually spends money as fast as he gets hold of it."

"What I would like to do would be to give him a good thrashing," muttered Hockley. "After I was done with him I shouldn't care if I got my money or not. I'd put him in a hospital—that would be better for all concerned than putting him in jail."

"Maybe you are right, Jake," returned Mark.

All sat down, to await the return of Professor

Strong. While so doing, Sam pointed out an article he had been reading in one of the magazines.

"It is about this new railroad that is to be opened between Valparaiso and Buenos Aires," said the youth from the Hub. "They call it the Trans-andine Railroad, because it crosses the Andes Mountains. The tunnel under the mountains is almost finished, and when completed the trains will run across South America from the Atlantic to the Pacific."

"That's a pretty long stretch," observed Darry.

"The road will be nearly nine hundred miles long."

"What about the tunnel under the Andes?" asked Frank.

"The tunnel is two miles long and is located two miles above sea level, so that, after leaving Valparaiso, a train must climb two miles up into the mountains before it reaches that hole through the rocks, and then it must climb down two miles on the other side before it reaches the great plains, or pampas, of Argentina."

"It must have been a great bit of engineering work, to build such a tunnel," was Mark's comment.

"It took several years to do it. Previous to that time, they had a railroad on this side of the Andes, and also another railroad through Argentina. They were of a different gauge, and that's the reason, as the professor told us, that travelers, in going from one ocean to the other, have to change cars."

"I wish we could go through to Buenos Aires by train," said Hockley, with a sigh. "It would be less tiresome than on horseback or muleback, and safer, too."

"Besides the tunnels, big and little, there are numerous wonderful bridges along the route," continued Sam. "One bridge spans a gorge between two mountains that is hundreds of feet deep. Think of putting up bridges like that!"

"Well, think of putting up the bridges between New York and Brooklyn," answered Mark, not a little proudly.

"And think of the tubes under the Hudson River," added Frank. "And the subways! I rather guess one engineering feat is about as difficult as another."

"If we take a run up to Santiago we'll see part of the railroad," said Darry. "And we'll probably see more of it in Argentina. We'll not want

to travel all the way across the pampas on horse-back."

"I imagine that the pampas are a good deal as our Western prairies used to be years ago, before everything was settled," remarked Frank. "If they are, they'll just suit you, Darry."

"Yes, I'll love to get on a good horse and have a free-and-easy ride," returned the Western youth. "It will seem like a touch of old times, when I used to ride around the ranch in Montana."

"Boys, I am afraid, after this trip through Central and South America is finished, we'll be sorry that it wasn't longer," commented Mark. "All told, we've had some fine times—and I've gotten a dandy lot of photos."

"And though we have been in peril a number of times we have always escaped with a whole skin," added Sam.

"I think I'll be glad to get back," said Hockley. "It hasn't been the fun I anticipated. I don't care for tramping through the wilderness, or climbing the mountains. I'd like to spend more of my time in the big cities, having a good time."

"Well, we've visited plenty of cities, big and little," answered Frank. "The other day I counted

up over sixty cities where we had stopped. That's not so bad."

"Oh, it's been a glorious trip, glorious!" cried Sam. "When I get back home it will take me six months to tell my mother all about it!" And his eyes beamed in anticipation of the pleasure he would be able to afford his widowed parent.

The boys waited until well past noon, and still Professor Strong did not return. Then, when it got to be after the lunch hour, one after another the young explorers commenced to grow uneasy.

"It is strange what is keeping him," said Mark, at last.

"I move we have something to eat," said Jake. "I'm as hungry as a bear."

There seemed nothing else to do, so they filed into the dining-hall and sat down at the table. They ate slowly, but when they had finished, Amos Strong was still missing.

"What do you make of this?" asked Darry, soberly.

"I don't know what to make of it," answered Mark.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PROFESSOR STRONG

"MARK, I think we ought to do something," said Darry, after two hours more had gone by and the young explorers had not heard a word from Professor Strong. "When he went away he said he would be back by noon at the latest. Now it is after four o'clock."

"What would you suggest?" asked the New York youth.

"I don't know, I'm sure. I thought that you might have something in mind."

"We might notify the police," put in Jake. "Send out an alarm, you know."

"He wouldn't like that," returned Sam, "especially if everything was all right. He may simply be following up Markel and Radell."

"I shouldn't care if I was sure he hadn't gotten into trouble," said Darry. "But he never stayed away like this before without letting us know."

When night came on and no word was received from the professor, the young explorers became more alarmed than ever.

"Do you know what I think I'll do?" said Mark. "Telephone to The Golden Crown Hotel and see if he is there."

"There won't be any harm in doing that," answered Sam, and the others nodded in approval.

The hotel mentioned was called up, and presently Mark got a clerk on the wire.

"Is this The Golden Crown Hotel?" asked the youth.

"Yes."

"I wish to learn if a Professor Strong called there to-day and if he is still there."

"Who are you?"

"I am Mark Robertson, one of the boys traveling with him."

"Oh, I see." There was a pause and a buzz of voices near the other end of the wire. "Hello! Professor Strong was here this morning, but went away about noon."

"About noon?" repeated Mark. "Do you know where he went?"

"No. Wait a minute." There was another

buzz from the distance. "Hello! Professor Strong went away with two men who had been stopping here, a Mr. Markel and a Mr. Radell."

"Where did they go?" And now Mark was growing excited.

"I don't know."

"Can you find out? This is very important," went on the New York youth, and his voice trembled with eagerness.

There followed a long pause, and at last Mark received another call.

"One of the porters here says that Professor Strong acted as if he was sick, and he says the other two men said they would take him to a doctor. All of them got in a carriage and drove away, but we don't know where they went."

"When was this?" Mark was so excited now he could scarcely speak. He felt certain that the tutor had been the victim of foul play.

"About noon, as I said before. That's all I can tell you." And now the man at the other end of the wire hung up his receiver, so that Mark could ask no more questions.

When the other lads heard what the New York youth had to tell, all were more alarmed than ever.

Various were the speculations concerning what had taken place, but all were agreed that Professor Strong had become the victim of some underhanded work, carried out by Dan Markel and Paul Radell.

"Markel said he would square accounts, and this is how he is doing it!" said Frank, bitterly. "If Professor Strong was really sick and yet able to do anything, he would have telephoned for some of us to come to him."

"I believe Markel drugged him, or something like that," put in Darry. "And he got Radell to aid him in his dirty work. The question is: What will they do with the professor?"

"That isn't the question for us. Our question is: What are we going to do?" cried Mark. "We've got to do something. We can't sit still here, knowing that the professor is suffering at the hands of those rascals!"

"Let us call a carriage and ride over to The Golden Crown," suggested Darry. "We'll be safe enough if we stick together."

"I'm going armed," put in Frank. "I'll take no more chances than are necessary. That merchant said The Golden Crown didn't have much of a reputation."

"We—er—we don't want to get into trouble," faltered Hockley.

"You can stay behind if you wish, Jake," answered Mark, quickly.

"Oh, I'll go along."

"It would be better for one of us to stay here," said Frank. "Then, if Professor Strong comes, he can tell him where we have gone."

"That would be best," said Darry. "Jake, you might as well stay."

"Well, if you think it would be best," answered the lank youth, and his freckled face showed his relief.

A carriage was called, and the four young explorers entered it. The driver looked somewhat surprised when told to take them to The Golden Crown, but he asked no questions, and started off immediately.

It was quite a drive, and it was dark by the time they came in sight of the hotel, a two-storied building of stone, set back from the street and surrounded by fine shrubbery.

"Wait here for us," said Mark, to the driver, as they alighted at the door. At once some porters came out, to assist with baggage, and they were

much chagrined when they discovered that the boys had none and did not intend to become guests at the hotel.

"Wait a moment," said Mark, in Spanish, to the porters. "I want to talk to you." And then he mentioned Professor Strong, and Markel and Radell, and asked if they could give any information, and at the same time he suggestively jingled some silver that was in his pocket.

Porters the world over are always on the lookout for tips, and these Chilians were no exception to the rule. All told of how the three men had departed in a carriage driven by a man known as Bolatero, a fellow not connected with the hotel, and who was willing to take any kind of a job so long as it paid. They said that one of the men had acted as if he was dazed when he got into the carriage, and the party had driven away rapidly. But nobody could tell where they had gone.

"Did you see them go?" asked Mark, of the head porter, and the man nodded in the affirmative.

"Do you know this Bolatero well?" questioned Frank.

"Oh, yes, ever since he has driven a carriage," was the reply.

"Do you know where he keeps his carriage, or where he lives?" went on Mark.

"*Si, señor.*"

"Then come with us and show us the places," went on Mark. "I will pay you well." And then he passed out some silver coins to the other porters, and showed some bank bills to the head man.

The head porter chanced to be a fellow who was somewhat miserly, and the thought of obtaining more than an ordinary tip was pleasing to him. More than this, on several occasions he had thrown business into the hands of Bolatero without being properly compensated for so doing, and so he had a grudge against the carriage driver. He quickly consented to go with the boys and do all in his power to locate the man who had carried Amos Strong away in his turnout.

They first visited a public square a dozen blocks away, where, so the porter said, Bolatero was in the habit of standing to solicit fares. But he was not there, and the other carriage drivers said he had not been around since morning.

"Then let us go to where he lives," said Mark, quickly, and they accordingly turned into a poorer quarter of Valparaiso. Here the streets were nar-

row and dirty, and houses and pavements swarmed with people. Drinking-places were numerous, and the sights to be seen around them filled the youths with disgust.

"I am glad we came armed," whispered Darry to Sam. "This doesn't suit me at all."

Fortunately the lads did not have to enter any of the houses. On the stone steps in front of one of the places sat a fat and greasy-looking Chilian woman with an equally fat and equally greasy-looking child in her arms.

"That is Bolatero's wife," said the porter. "Evidently he is not home, or she would be inside, serving him with something to eat."

"Ask her if she knows where her husband is," returned Mark.

This was done, and the woman declared that her husband had not been home since early morning.

"And he has left me no money with which to do the marketing," she added, sourly. "He is a wretch, to leave his wife and child in this way. He goes away, and drinks, and drives around and has a good time, and I can sit here and starve!" And she wiped her greasy face on her sleeve.

"She doesn't look much like starving," whispered

Sam. "She is probably as lazy as her husband is dissolute." Nevertheless, as they drove off, he tossed her a small coin, and the others did the same, and she ducked her head and smiled grimly after them. Not a word did she ask as to why they might wish to see her husband. Probably just then she felt so bitter she did not care.

"Let us go to where he stables his horse," suggested Frank. "He is bound to come back with the animal sooner or later."

"That's the talk!" cried Darry.

"It won't be a very nice place to visit," said the porter. "But I think you will catch him there."

The stable was some distance away, and they had to drive slowly, for the street had been torn up. Just as they turned a corner the porter called on the driver to stop the turnout.

"There is Bolatero now," he whispered, pointing to one side of the torn-up highway.

The boys looked, and saw a large carriage, of ancient pattern, standing with two wheels in a ditch. On the seat of the turnout sat a bloated-faced Chilian, crying angrily to his steeds, and cracking his whip on their backs. The horses looked tired enough to drop, and they were covered with foam

and dust. To escape the cruel lashing the team commenced to turn, almost upsetting the carriage.

"Stop that!" cried Darry, and leaped to the street. "Don't hit them again, you brute! Can't you see they are tired to death? You hit them again and I'll take the lash and hit you!"

As my old readers know, the Western boy was a great lover of horseflesh, and to see an animal abused made his blood boil with indignation. He strode up to the steeds, turned them straight, and shook his fist at the driver. The Chilian stared in amazement, and the lashing came to an end.

"Who are you?" asked Bolatero, thickly. He had been drinking heavily.

"I'll show you who I am if you abuse those horses again," answered Darry, in broken Spanish. "You're a brute to strike them like that. Don't you dare to do it again."

To this the driver did not answer, simply because he did not know what to say.

"If you do not want me any longer, I will go," said the hotel porter, nervously, for he was afraid there might be a fight. "But I have earned my reward, have I not?" he added, anxiously.

"Yes," answered Mark, and passed over a small

bank bill. This the porter promptly pocketed, and then he lost no time in retreating to a distance, so that the carriage driver might not notice him.

"Your name is Bolatero, I believe," said Mark, coming up and eyeing the fellow sternly.

"And what if it is?" demanded the fellow, eyeing him suspiciously.

"I want to talk to you."

"What do you want?"

"I want to know where you have taken Professor Amos Strong, and the two men named Markel and Radell."

CHAPTER XV

A THRILLING RESCUE

AT first the Chilian carriage driver was inclined to deny all knowledge of Professor Strong and the men who had been with him. But when Mark and the others threatened him with arrest, and made a move as if to call an officer, he weakened.

"I know not where they are now—I drive them early in the morning, that is all," he faltered.

"I do not believe you," answered Mark, sternly. "You know where they are, and unless you take us to the place at once I will have you locked up for abduction."

"Abduction?" cried the carriage driver.

"Exactly."

"I did not abduct the gentleman—he was with the other men."

"Take us to him at once, or it will go hard with you," put in Frank.

All talked to the fellow so sternly that in the end

he was badly frightened. He said he would go with them, in their carriage, provided he was first allowed to put up his own team. This was agreed to, Darry saying he would assist. All the boys saw to it that Bolatero should not escape.

"I am hungry, I must have something to eat," the man said, after feeding the horses.

"You can wait," returned Mark.

"It is a long drive—ten miles at least."

"I'll get you some food," answered Sam. "But you must not drink another drop while you are with us."

Bolatero demurred, but the young explorers were firm, and Sam and Frank brought some food from a near-by eating-place. Then they drove off, Bolatero giving the necessary directions. He sat on the front seat, with the driver of the carriage on one side of him and Mark on the other, while Frank, Sam, and Darry occupied the seat behind.

"Now don't you try to play us any trick," warned Mark, as they drove along. "We are armed, and we mean business. You take us direct to where you took Professor Strong, or we'll see to it that you are sent to prison."

"I am an innocent man," pleaded the Chilian.

"I did only what the men asked of me, and I received only my regular fare—not one cent more!"

"You knew that Professor Strong was being carried off against his will."

"Not so, *señor*. The other men said he was their friend, and that he was sick here," and Bolatero tapped his forehead. "They said they would take him to a private hospital, where he would soon recover."

"And you took him to that hospital?" asked Mark.

"I am an innocent man," pleaded the Chilian. "I know not what sort of a place it is."

"Well, you take us there as soon as you can, and we'll find out."

The team was urged on, and soon Valparaiso was left behind and they turned into a country road lined on either side with fine houses. Then they turned into a side road, leading around some rough rocks.

"I don't like this much," whispered Sam. "Perhaps he is going to play us some trick."

"He wouldn't dare—with so many of us in the carriage," answered Darry. "But keep on guard, to prevent a surprise."

Two miles more were covered, and then they made another turn. Here the mountainous road was far from good.

"You are sure you are right?" questioned Mark, catching Bolatero by the arm.

"*Si, señor.*"

"How much further have we to go?"

"Only a short distance. The place is yonder," and the Chilian pointed with his hand.

They made another turn, and here the highway was better. Beyond was a side road, thickly lined with trees and bushes. At a distance a light shone through the darkness and the dim outline of a house could be faintly seen.

"There is the place," said the Chilian.

"You brought them here?" questioned Mark.

"To the very gate, but no further. They said they did not want me to come in, that they could assist their friend. They paid me off and told me to go—and I went."

"I think we had better go up to the house on foot," said Frank. "If they hear the carriage coming they may be on guard, and we may have trouble. They may even put Professor Strong out of sight and say he is not here."

Frank's suggestion was considered a good one, and all the boys alighted from the carriage.

"You remain here, with the other driver," said Mark to Bolatero. "If you dare to leave, it will be the worse for you. We know where to find you in the city."

"I will remain," answered the Chilian, surlily.

The boys advanced through the darkness until they reached the vicinity of a small stone house, set in a wilderness of bushes. The house was in a sad state of neglect, and looked deserted saving for the light of a lamp which shone from the window of a room at one end.

"Let us look in at the window," suggested Mark, and to this the others readily agreed.

They listened, but could hear no sound. Then they hurried towards the window. As they did this, Sam stumbled over a stone in the darkness and went down, uttering a short exclamation as he did so.

"Who is there?" cried a voice from out of the darkness.

"Dan Markel!" ejaculated Mark, and turned in the direction from whence the voice had proceeded.

"Don't you dare to come in this house!" roared

the voice of the man from Baltimore. "Stand where you are, all of you!"

"Who is coming?" asked another voice, and now some of the lads recognized the tones of Paul Radell.

"Those boys."

"The ones who are traveling with Strong?"

"Yes."

"Then we are caught!" murmured Radell, and his tones showed his anxiety.

"Not yet!" answered Dan Markel. "Keep back!" he shouted, out of an open window. "If you advance another foot it will be at your own peril."

"Markel, tell us what you have done with Professor Strong," called out Sam.

"I don't know anything about him."

"Yes, you do. We know you brought him here."

"They must have discovered that carriage driver," murmured Paul Radell. "I told you not to trust him."

"Well, I had to get Strong here somehow," answered Dan Markel, in a low voice. "I didn't think they'd find out anything before morning, and then we would have been on our way to the mountains."

"Professor Strong! Are you here?" shouted Darry. "Professor Strong!"

He called out at the top of his lungs, and some of the others joined in. Then came a crash and a shutter from an upper window fell to the ground.

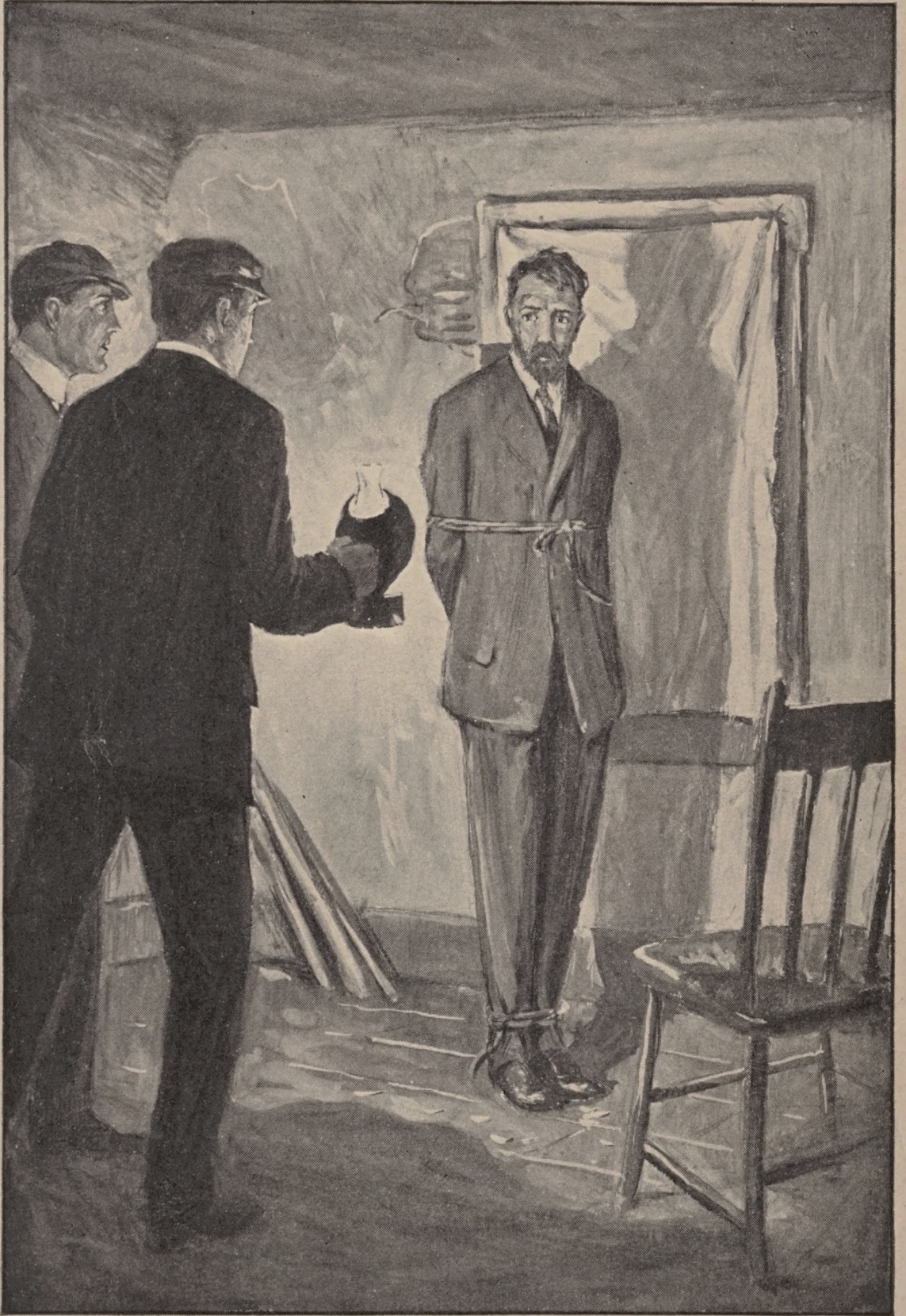
"Help! help, boys!" came in a muffled voice. "I am bound and helpless!"

"It's the professor!" cried Mark. "Come on!" And regardless of consequences, he ran for the nearest door of the building. The others followed in a bunch, each drawing his weapon as he advanced.

But their caution was unnecessary, for with the crashing down of the shutter from above, and the rush of the four boys, the nerve of both Markel and Radell seemed to desert them. They fled to the rear of the house, bolted through a door, and rushed forth into the darkness.

As the two men went out the boys came in. While Darry and Sam went to the rear, following Markel and Radell, Frank caught up the lamp and, with Mark on his heels, mounted the stairs. He heard a call from a room and, finding the door locked, promptly kicked the barrier down.

The sight that met their gaze caused Frank and



THE SIGHT CAUSED FRANK AND MARK TO STARE IN WONDER.
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Mark to stare in wonder. In the middle of the room stood Professor Strong, his hands and feet bound tightly to a board running from his heels to his neck. From a cut on his forehead the blood was trickling over his face. His eyes looked blood-shot, and had a strange glare to them.

"Thank Heaven you have come to save me!" he murmured, hoarsely.

"Are Markel and Radell alone?" questioned Mark, quickly, as he brought out his pocket-knife and cut the tutor's bonds.

"I think so, although they spoke of meeting some Chilians from the mountains—some fellows as rascally as themselves," replied Amos Strong. "Boys, I am as weak as a rag—the drug they gave me has done it. I must rely on you to save me!" And then the professor sank on a bench in a corner.

"We'll save you, never fear—or die trying," answered Frank. "I'll see if I can't find a drink of water for you, or something to brace you up."

He ran below, and presently found a jug of water and returned with this to the tutor. He was given a drink, and his forehead was bathed, and gradually he became better, although his head ached for a long while after.

Leaving Frank to care for the professor, Mark ran below and followed in the direction taken by Sam and Darry. He passed a stable and some farm buildings, and then gave a call. The others answered, and soon he joined them, at a point where a stone wall marked a back road.

"Did you catch 'em?" he asked.

"No, they gave us the slip in the darkness," answered the boy from the West, in disgust. "Too bad! I'd like to have 'em both arrested."

"So would I, Darry."

"What of the professor, is he safe?" questioned Sam.

"I think so. But we had better go back—if those men can't be captured."

"They went off in the darkness, and we couldn't even see what direction they took."

After another look around, the boys returned to the house, which they soon saw was old and dilapidated. It had evidently been locked up for a long time, for the rooms smelt musty and were covered with dust and cobwebs. Only the lamp, the water jug, and a market basket with some provisions looked new, as if Markel and Radell had brought them in that day.

"They evidently found out the place was vacant, and they took possession," said Mark, and in this surmise he was correct.

The boys wanted to hear Professor Strong's story, and he told it while they were assisting him to the carriage, after the house had been searched in vain for clues of Markel and Radell.

"I went to The Golden Crown Hotel and asked for Markel," said the tutor. "I was kept waiting for quite a while, and then, much to my surprise, Paul Radell came to see me. He acted very nicely, and said that Markel was sick, and that he did not know what to do for the fellow. He added that Markel was sorry he had acted so unfairly towards us, and that he would like to patch things up and make a fresh start. Radell talked so smoothly that I was taken off my guard, and I consented to visit Markel in his room, which was on the top floor of the hotel, and at the end of a long hallway.

"When I got in the room, Markel was in bed, and he certainly looked sick. He had a coughing spell, and Radell pretended that he might choke to death if he wasn't given some of his medicine. He asked me to hold a bottle for him, and I did so. Then, of a sudden, he got behind me and clapped

some stuff to my nose and mouth, and Markel leaped up from the bed and aided him in holding me tight. I struggled all I could, but I was no match for both of them, and presently I began to grow dizzy. Then the next thing I knew, I was on the bed, and they were pouring some drug down my throat. I tried to struggle, but I was as weak as a cat. The drug completely bewildered me, and, like one in a dream, I found myself taken to the carriage for a long drive, and brought in here. Then, when I had partly recovered, I was bound to that board, and the door was locked. I didn't know what to do until I heard you boys shouting my name. Then I lowered my head and rammed the old window shutter with the top end of the board. It gave way and fell; and you know the rest."

CHAPTER XVI

SIGHTSEEING IN SANTIAGO DE CHILI

"I AM mighty glad we started out to find you," said Darry.

"So am I," added Frank. "It's a great pity we didn't catch those rascals. They should never be allowed at large. Instead of growing better, Markel is growing worse."

"Did they take anything from you?" queried Mark.

"They took everything I possessed."

"Everything!" cried Sam.

"That is, everything I happened to be carrying with me when I visited The Golden Crown—my watch and chain, my ring, and something like thirty dollars in money, besides my pocket-knife and my pistol."

"Then we must catch them, by all means!" came from Darry.

"Can't you make that hotel responsible?" questioned the youth from Boston.

"Hardly, Samuel. I might make a complaint, but what would be the use? It would simply mean delay, and I am pretty certain I would gain nothing," returned Professor Strong, with a grave shake of his head.

The tutor felt rather stiff and weak, and Mark assisted him down the stairs and to the carriage. Here the regular driver and Bolatero were waiting in evident suspense.

"Did this man have anything to do with assaulting you, Professor?" asked Mark, pointing to Bolatero.

"Not that I can remember, Mark? Where did you pick him up?"

"He is the fellow who drove the carriage in which you were brought to this place."

"Oh, I remember now! No, so far as I know, he simply obeyed the orders of Markel and Radell."

"But didn't he know you were a prisoner?"

"That I can't tell, for I was too stupefied to take notice. He may have thought I was simply one of their companions under the influence of liquor."

"Then you don't want him arrested?"

"Not unless he can aid us in catching Markel and Radell."

On the way back to Valparaiso, the matter was discussed freely. Bolatero insisted that he knew absolutely nothing concerning the plans of Markel and Radell, nor where they had gone, and our friends were inclined to believe him. The man begged to be allowed to go to his family, and this permission was granted. Then the professor and the boys returned to their hotel, where the carriage driver was paid off and dismissed.

It was nearly one o'clock in the morning, and Hockley had retired to his room. But as soon as they came up, he ran out to meet them, having thrown himself on the bed without undressing.

"Where have you been?" he cried. "Are you all right?" he went on, to the professor. "I stayed downstairs until midnight."

"It's a long story, Jacob," answered Amos Strong. "I'll tell you the particulars in the morning. Now all of us had better get to bed and get a good night's rest—we need it."

"Do you want a doctor, Professor?" asked Sam.

"No, I think a good night's rest will fix me up," was the reply, and this surmise proved true; in the

morning Professor Strong came down to breakfast looking as strong and well as ever. The only mark he carried of his adventure was the cut on his forehead, which had been carefully washed and bound with a bit of court-plaster.

When Jake heard the particulars of what had occurred, he was a bit envious over what the other boys had done, and wished he had been along.

"If I had been there," he said, boastfully, "I would have made Markel a prisoner, sure! We won't be safe until that man is behind the bars!"

"Well, you can capture him the next time, Jake," answered Darry, dryly.

"And the quicker the better," added Sam.

The entire day was spent in making inquiries concerning Markel and Radell, but nothing came of this. The rascals had left The Golden Crown without paying their bills, and the hotel-keeper was correspondingly angry at them. They were reported to the police; and there the matter rested.

On the following day Professor Strong and the boys went sightseeing, visiting the public buildings of Valparaiso, and also a Chilean warship that chanced to be lying in the harbor. On the warship they met an under-officer known to the tutor, and

he showed them through every part of the vessel, which was as well equipped as ships of the same class belonging to much larger countries.

The next day was Sunday, and the whole party attended services at an English church, and then rested and wrote letters to the folks at home. It was decided that they should take a train for the capital in the morning.

"The place is commonly called Santiago," said Professor Strong. "But the real name is Santiago de Chili. It was founded by Valdivia, in 1541. It has been visited by numerous earthquakes, some quite serious."

"I was reading that once a church burned down, with some people in it," said Frank.

"Yes, it was the Jesuit Church, and it is said that two thousand people were burned up with it."

"What a terrible happening!" murmured Sam.

"How far is Santiago from here?" questioned Jake.

"The distance by rail is about a hundred and fifteen miles. It is on the Mapocho River, but located nearly two thousand feet above sea level. What is rather strange is that the river water is not fit to drink, so water is brought into Santiago

through an aqueduct from the mountains five miles away."

"I hope we don't strike any earthquakes while we are there," sighed Hockley.

"I wonder if Markel and Radell went to Santiago," mused Sam.

"If they did, more than likely they'll keep out of sight," answered Mark.

Noon of the next day found them well on the way to the capital of Chili. The route was through a fertile valley, and then on a long upgrade of the Cuesta del Prado hills or mountains—the chain lying between Valparaiso and the Andes proper.

"Here is where you can get a view!" cried Darry, as the train slowed up around a curve and came out on something of a plateau.

"I think I see the ocean!" cried Frank, but before he could make sure they passed in behind some rocks, and the view was lost. Then came a downgrade, and half an hour later they found themselves approaching the capital. They had made several stops, and travelers of various nationalities had gotten off and on the train, many in American or European attire, but the majority with native, broad-brimmed hats and *ponchos* of various colors,

a *poncho* being, as many of my young readers must know, a narrow blanket, with a slit in the middle. The head of the wearer is usually placed through this slit, and the ends of the blanket are allowed to hang down.

The boys had expected to find a lively town, but they were surprised by the bustle and confusion around them. They found the streets almost all straight, as in our own city of Philadelphia, but the majority of the buildings were but one story high, giving the capital a squatty appearance.

"Why don't they build 'em higher?" questioned Sam. "I should think ground would be too valuable to waste this way. Why, in our own cities the buildings would be at least four or five stories high, even if there weren't any skyscrapers."

"They build low on account of the earthquakes," answered Professor Strong. "A one-story building can withstand a shake that would tumble a tall structure to the ground."

"Then they must be looking for earthquakes all the time," said Jake, and his face showed he was anything but pleased.

"As a matter of fact, Jacob, they average twenty to thirty earthquakes a year down here, just as they

do in many other parts of South America. But many of the quakes are so slight that the inhabitants pay no attention to them. If a quake seems extra heavy, they run out into the street until it is over, and then return to their houses or business places."

"I don't want to be here when an earthquake comes," answered the lank youth, and looked as if he would like to leave the city then and there.

"Jake is a regular calf about earthquakes," whispered Frank to Darry.

"Do you know what I'd like to do, Frank?" answered the Western youth, with a twinkle in his eyes. "I'd like to play a joke on him—make him think we'd struck an earthquake that was going to knock the hotel down. Wouldn't he be scared out of his wits?"

"Say, that would be great!" cried the New York boy. "Let us do it."

"All right—if we get the chance."

"But you must tell Mark and Sam, so they can enjoy the fun."

"Of course."

Santiago was crowded with sightseers and business people, but Professor Strong had telegraphed

ahead for rooms, and when they arrived at a leading hotel they found first-class accommodations awaiting them. They were glad enough to rest and wash up after the long and smoky railroad journey, and all voted to take it easy for the rest of the day.

In the morning they commenced their sightseeing, and this lasted for the rest of the week. They visited the grand cathedral and the national art gallery, with its many famous paintings, and then walked through the great national library. Later on, they inspected such portions of the mint as were thrown open to the public, and rode to the university. Professor Strong had a letter of introduction to one of the instructors at this seat of learning, and this gentleman took them around the buildings, and, the next day, took them to the Congressional Hall, and even introduced them to a number of the political officials.

"I am very glad to meet some boys from the United States," said one of the Chilean congressmen. "It will give you an idea of what we are doing down here. I have visited the United States a number of times, and I have been amazed at the ignorance displayed concerning South America in general."

"I believe you," answered Sam. "When we left home I had a hazy idea of the countries down here, but I never dreamed of such big cities, and so much commerce, and so many up-to-the-minute improvements. We'll have to hustle in the States, or, the first thing we know, you'll be ahead of us." And this remark made the Chilean congressman laugh heartily. He and some of his friends consented to stand for their pictures, and Mark and the others got several snap-shots which they treasured highly.

From the capital buildings the young explorers went to the conservatory of music, and likewise visited the school of agriculture and the military academy. The drilling of the young soldiers interested Frank especially.

"Almost as good as the drilling at West Point," said he.

"You are right," returned Mark. "No use in talking, Chili is a great country—but all of the South American countries are great when you come to look them over carefully."

Santiago boasts of a national theater, and when the boys heard that a performance of one of the standard tragedies was to be given that evening, they begged to go.

“Very well, I’ll see if I can get tickets,” answered Amos Strong, and a little later announced that he had procured very good seats.

Coming back to the hotel to wash up, Darry called his chums to him. He did not call Jake, and at once the others knew that something was in the wind.

“I’ve got it all arranged,” said the Western youth, when the crowd of four were in his room.

“About the earthquake?” queried Frank.

“Yes. I think we can scare Glummy almost to death.”

“Tell us all about it,” said Mark. “What do you propose to do?”

CHAPTER XVII

HOCKLEY THE BRAVE

“WELL, in the first place, you know Glummy has the room at the corner of the building,” commenced Darry.

“Yes, we know that,” answered Sam.

“It has two windows in it, good, broad windows, too.”

“So I noticed,” came from Mark. “But go on, we haven’t much time to spare, if we are going to that performance.”

“Well, my idea is simply this,” pursued Darry. “Glummy is getting to be a regular fresh-air fiend, and leaves all his windows wide open. I’ve got two bags all ready in my room. One is filled with broken glass and old crockeryware, and the other has old plaster and flour in it. Well, when we are coming home I am going to remark that I heard a native saying the air felt just like an earthquake, and that a shake was due. That will be sure to set

Jake on edge. Then when he goes to bed, we can go below and throw the bags into his room through the windows. The glass and crockeryware will make a great crash, and the plaster and flour will fill the room with dust. We can yell earthquake, and I'll wager Glummy will be scared stiff."

"It's a great plan!" cried Frank.

"He'll be as mad as a hornet when he learns the truth," was Mark's comment.

"What do we care?" returned Sam. "We'll have the joke on him, and no mistake."

"He may complain to the professor."

"I don't think he will. He'll be too ashamed of himself," said Darry.

The boys continued to talk the proposed joke over, and at the same time dressed for dinner and to go to the theater. Professor Strong had gone to his own room, and they imagined that Hockley was still below.

But they made a mistake regarding the lank youth. He had noticed the peculiar looks passing between the other boys, and he at once surmised that they were up to something, and did not want him to know anything about it.

"Want to leave me out of some good time, I sup-

pose," he mused, sourly. "It isn't fair, after we all promised to bury the hatchet. I wonder what they are going to do? I guess I had better make it my business to find out."

He watched the other lads closely, and when he saw them enter the room assigned to Sam and Darry, he was not above playing the eavesdropper at the door.

When he heard of Darry's plan to scare him he was, at first, greatly enraged, and had hard work to keep from rushing into the room and speaking his mind. Then he thought he would go off and inform Professor Strong.

"We can let 'em play the trick, and then the professor can punish 'em as they deserve," he told himself. "Yes, that's what I'll do, tell Strong."

He walked half way to the professor's room, located down the long hallway, and then, of a sudden, came to a halt. In the semi-darkness something like a grin appeared on his face.

"I won't go to the professor," he murmured. "I'll fight this out alone. I'll let them play their joke, and I won't take the least bit of notice. I'll pretend to be asleep and not wake up. That will make Darry Crane and all the rest feel sick."

The more he thought of his way to get square the more it pleased him, until, when he was dressing to go to the theater, he was actually humming a tune.

"Jake is unusually light-hearted to-night," observed Mark. "He must have gotten good news in that letter he received from home."

"Just wait till later," returned Darry, and winked, and at this all the others smiled broadly.

The performance of the old-time tragedy was well acted, and the young explorers and their tutor enjoyed the play greatly. As it was in Spanish, the lads did not understand all that was said, but this did not matter, since they all knew the plot of the tragedy. They were also interested in the audience, as many of the rich Chilian ladies were present, in their gorgeous costumes and diamonds.

"It's almost like going to grand opera in New York," was Frank's comment.

"This is a national theater, remember," said Amos Strong. "The government has an interest in it and helps to pay the bills. That is why the performance is of such a high class."

After the show Sam said he was thirsty, and they had some chocolate and fancy cakes, and also some

ice-cream. Then they lost no further time in getting back to the hotel, for it was growing late. On the way the boys talked earthquake, just to get Hockley "worked up," as Darry expressed it. The lank youth shook his head and said he didn't want any earthquakes to come his way, and then turned his face aside to hide the grin that came to it.

"We'll have to wait until he is in bed," whispered Frank to Darry, after Hockley and the professor had said good-night.

"Of course we'll wait," answered the Western youth. "No use in spoiling the joke, after I went to so much trouble."

Darry brought the two bags of stuff from a closet where he had had them hidden, and then the four boys sat down to wait.

"Now, if we work it just right, I am certain Glummy will be scared half to death," said Darry.

"I hope he left both windows open," came from Sam. "We can heave the glass and stuff through one and the plaster and flour through the other."

"Just the way I figured it out. You and I can carry one bag down, and Frank and Mark can carry the other."

The air seemed very oppressive, and the time went

by slowly. But at last Darry considered that they had waited long enough, and he and Sam took up one bag, and Frank and Mark the other, and all crept out of the room and down the stairs of the hotel to the first floor.

"Let us go out of the side door, so nobody can see us," whispered the Western youth.

His advice was followed, and in a minute more they stood out in the courtyard, directly under one of the windows of Hockley's room, which was located at an angle of the structure.

"Now then!" cried Darry, and he and Sam gave a swing to the bag containing broken glass and crockeryware. It sailed upward and disappeared from view through the open window, landing on the floor beyond with a resounding crash.

"Now the other!" yelled Darry, quickly, and then that, too, went up and through the second window, filling the room with a white cloud of plaster and flour dust.

"An earthquake! an earthquake!" yelled all four of the boys, getting as close to Hockley's windows as possible. "Get up, Jake! It's an earthquake!"

They had just begun to call out when a most surprising thing happened. There was a strange

rumble in the air, and then the very ground on which they were standing commenced to quake.

"Wha-what's this?" stammered Darry.

"That's what I would like to know," returned Mark.

The ground beneath them continued to tremble, and then came a distinct shock that almost threw them off their feet.

"It's an earthquake, that's what it is, a real earthquake!" screamed Frank. "Boys, we have got to get out of here!"

They all looked at each other in sudden terror. Was it really an earthquake, or was it some trick of the imagination?

"Perhaps——" began Darry, when there came another shock, much more severe than the first. All were thrown to the ground, and down from the hotel roof dropped some tiling.

There was no mistaking the truth—it was a genuine earthquake, and with their hearts in their throats the boys turned and fled from the courtyard into the street in front of the hotel. As they passed out they were joined by other guests, and by the clerks and porters and other hired help. Some were screaming in terror, but for the most part the crowd

was silent, having gone through numerous earthquakes in the past.

“Boys! boys! where are you? Darry! Mark! Frank! Jake! Samuel!” It was Professor Strong calling. He came into the street clad in his pajamas and with his other clothing in his arms.

“Here we are!” called back Mark, and ran to the tutor’s side. Just as he did this there was another slight quake, and everybody held his or her breath, wondering how bad it would become. But it was soon at an end, and then all breathed easier and began to look around.

“Why, how is it you are dressed?” queried the professor, as the others came up. “I didn’t have time to put on my clothes.”

“Well—er—we hadn’t gone to bed yet,” stammered Frank, as nobody else spoke.

“Indeed! Well, you should have gone, but in this case perhaps it is just as well. Where is Jacob?”

“That’s so—why didn’t Jake come out?” cried Mark.

“Maybe he was hurt by a falling wall, or something,” suggested Sam. And then he looked at his chums, and they knew that by “something” he

meant the bags they had thrown through the windows.

"I'm going in to see where he is!" burst out Darry, and before Professor Strong could stop him the Western youth had disappeared inside the hotel.

"Brave boy!" murmured the tutor, not knowing what was on Darry's mind. "I'll go, too."

"So will I!" added Mark, and he followed, and Sam and Frank came on their heels.

By this time the earthquake was at an end. There were no more shocks, and gradually the excitement subsided and the guests went back to their rooms, and the other folks in the street went to their homes.

It took Darry but a minute to reach the door to Hockley's room. He found it locked, and gave a loud knock. Then he gave another knock, for there came no answer to his summons.

"Jake! wake up! There is an earthquake!" he called out, wildly.

"Oh, go to bed and let me sleep!" came in surly tones.

"But there is an earthquake!" insisted Darry, and now Professor Strong came up to the door, and the others followed.

"I don't care if there are a dozen earthquakes," droned Jake. "I want to sleep. Go away and leave me alone."

"Did you ever hear the like!" gasped Mark. "An earthquake, and he wants to sleep."

"You may be scared, but I am not," went on the lank youth. "Go on and stand in the middle of the street if you want to. I'm going to stay in bed."

"Well! well!" murmured Professor Strong. "How extraordinary! And I imagined that he was afraid of earthquakes! He is more calm than any of the rest of us!"

"It gets me!" murmured Darry, and gazed helplessly at his chums. "Jake always was a puzzle to me," he added.

"Jacob, are you sure you are quite safe?" asked Professor Strong.

At the professor's question the tall youth listened in wonder. He had thought that only the boys were there, trying to annoy him. He had covered his head with a blanket, but now he threw the covering aside and sat up.

"Is that you, Professor Strong?" he asked.

"Yes, Jacob. I want to know if you are all right."

"Why, yes, sir, I am."

"Then the earthquake didn't harm you any?"

"Not in the least. But the room is in a mess. Somebody will have to clean it up in the morning. I'm not going to get up to do it now," pursued the tall youth.

"Very strange, very!" murmured the professor. He paused for a moment in perplexity. "Well, if you are safe it's all right, and we'll go to bed," he added, as no more earthquake shocks seemed to be coming.

"Yes, sir! Good-night!" called out Hockley, and then those outside heard him turn over on his bed.

"A queer youth, but evidently quite brave!" murmured the tutor. He turned to the other lads. "As the scare is over, we may as well all turn in again," he added, and walked to his own room and disappeared.

With looks on their faces that betokened complete bewilderment, the four chums walked slowly into the room occupied by Darry and Sam, closed the door, turned up the light, and then gazed helplessly at one another.

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

"WELL, what's the answer?" demanded Mark, after a silence which was positively oppressive.

"Search me," answered Frank, slangily. "I was positive Glummy would be scared to death."

"We had all our troubles for our pains," grumbled Darry. "Boys, I am sorry I made you work so hard for nothing."

"Jake must have been fooling when he said he was afraid of earthquakes," came from Sam. "Maybe he did it just to see what we would say."

"Fellows, I think I've solved the riddle!" almost shouted Mark.

"Then tell us quickly," answered Darry. "Don't keep us in suspense."

"I believe Glummy didn't know there was a real earthquake!"

"What!"

"He thought that all the rumpus was caused by

Yours Truly & Company. In some manner he got on to the fact that we were going to play the joke, and he made up his mind to pay us back by refusing to be scared. When the real earthquake came he thought it was part of the trick."

"Maybe you are right," returned Frank, slowly.

"I believe Mark has hit the truth of the matter," said Sam. "And if he has, then Glummy has the laugh on us, instead of us having the laugh on him."

The boys talked the affair over in low tones, and at last concluded that Mark had guessed the truth. Darry felt much crestfallen, because his joke had fallen flat.

"Don't you care," said Frank. "No one would expect an earthquake to come along and spoil his sport."

"I'll wager Jake will crow in the morning," returned the boy from the West. "Just you wait and listen!"

"Maybe we can turn the trick yet," came slowly from Sam.

"I don't see how," returned Darry.

"We might wait until we are certain Glummy is asleep, and then sneak into his room and remove

those two bags of stuff. Then we can pretend that all the trouble was caused by the real earthquake."

"Good! We'll do it!" cried Darry. "Anything so that he can't have the laugh on us."

It was decided that they should wait half an hour and then visit the lank youth's apartment. As the door was locked, they had to get in by one of the windows. A balcony was handy, so this was easy. Darry went ahead, to see if the coast was clear.

"He's asleep and snoring like a sawmill," he announced, after an inspection. "Now don't make any noise when getting the stuff out, or you may wake him up."

On tiptoes the four boys entered the room. A light from outside shone through one window, and by this they were able to see around them.

Both of the bags had been flimsy and had broken, causing the contents to scatter in every direction. But the boys had prepared for this by bringing along a pair of bedsheets, and into these they placed the broken glass, crockeryware, and plaster. They noticed that some plaster had fallen from the ceiling of the room, but this they did not touch, nor did they disturb a dresser that had been knocked over and a picture that had fallen.

"Now, I guess we have everything," whispered Darry, after a final look around. "Come on, before he wakes up," and then, as silently as possible, they left the room, taking the stuff thrown through the windows with them. They had no difficulty in disposing of the rubbish on a heap in an alleyway, and then they brushed off the sheets and took them back to their own rooms.

Despite what had occurred, the four young explorers slept soundly during the remainder of the night. Sam was the first to awaken, and he quickly aroused the others.

"Now be careful what you say," cautioned Darry. "Let Jake and the professor do the talking."

They went below, and soon the tall youth appeared. He was attired in one of his best traveling suits and acted as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. Behind him came Professor Strong.

"Well, boys, how are you this morning?" came pleasantly from the tutor.

"Very well, thank you," murmured Darry, and his chums uttered words of similar import.

"And how are you?" questioned Amos Strong, turning to Jake.

"Oh, I'm all right," was the careless response.

"That earthquake woke me up once or twice, but I soon got to sleep again." And Jake grinned broadly.

"Then you weren't frightened at all?" queried the tutor. He was not yet willing to believe that Hockley could really be so brave.

"No, sir, I wasn't scared a bit!" cried the lank youth, and then his face turned a bit sour. "I don't like that kind of a joke, and somebody has got to clean up my room and put it to rights! I won't do it!"

"A—er—a joke!" gasped Amos Strong. "Jacob, do you consider that earthquake a joke?"

"Earthquake? There wasn't any earthquake! Those fellows——"

"Wasn't any earthquake?" interrupted Darry. "Why, Jake, what are you talking about? We had quite a bad earthquake last night; didn't we, Professor?"

"We certainly had an earthquake," was the answer. "Although it was not as bad as it might have been. I thought——"

Just then an American visitor at the hotel, who had met the tutor the day before, rushed up, smiling.

"Glad to see you are all right!" he cried. "Say,

that was quite an earthquake we had last night, wasn't it? Knocked the plaster off the ceiling in my room, and nearly smothered me. Nobody in your party hurt, I hope."

"No, we are all safe, Mr. Barnum," answered Professor Strong.

"Then you are better off than some of the others," pursued Mr. Barnum. "One of the guests had a bureau fall on his toes, and another man ran outside and some tiling from a roof hit him, and they had to take him to the hospital. They tell me that some of the statues in the park were thrown down by the earthquake. But it might have been worse, I presume," finished Mr. Barnum, philosophically.

Jake listened to the talk, and when he heard what Mr. Barnum had to say his face became a study. He pushed his way forward.

"Did you—er—say a man was hurt by an—er—the earthquake?" he stammered.

"Oh, yes, and they had to take him to the hospital."

"And some—er—statues in the park were knocked down?"

"Yes, and a new building they were putting up

on the corner was wrecked, too," added Mr. Barnum. "Oh, it was lively enough while it lasted!"

"Indeed it was!" came from Amos Strong.

"What did you boys do?" asked the new acquaintance, curiously.

"Oh, we dusted outside as quickly as possible," answered Sam. "That is, all but Jake here. He didn't seem to mind the earthquake in the least."

"You didn't?" cried Mr. Barnum. "Well, you are one out of a thousand, I can tell you that. Almost everybody I knew got out of the building in jig time." And then the crowd moved toward the dining-hall. Here Mr. Barnum pointed out several places where the earthquake had done some damage.

Jake was now convinced that there had been a real earthquake, and he looked at the other boys and the professor in wonder, while his face grew a trifle pale. He did not understand the matter thoroughly, but realized that he had escaped a great peril. He ate his meal in silence, and when the professor turned away, to make arrangements for further sightseeing, he motioned to the other boys and led them to the reading-room.

"See here, I want to get at the bottom of this!" he said, in a low, strained voice.

"Bottom of what?" asked Darry, coolly.

"Oh, you know well enough! You fellows were going to play a trick on me—I know all about it, for I overheard your plans. Now then, what was it happened?"

Jake was so serious that the others could not hold in longer, and one after another commenced to laugh. This made Hockley angry at first, but finally he was forced to grin.

"Better not spoil it, Jake," said Mark. "You're a real hero—the professor thinks you are the bravest fellow in the bunch. While all of us run for our lives, you turn over and go to sleep."

"But did the earthquake really occur, or is it all a joke?"

"Do those damaged ceilings and walls look like a joke?" asked Frank.

"No, but—but——" The lank youth did not know how to proceed.

"It's a fact, Jake, that the earthquake really and truly came and scared everybody but you out of his wits," answered Sam. "We pounded on your door and tried to get you out, but you refused to budge. Now see what a hero you are."

"Hero? I'm no hero, and you know it!" burst

out the tall youth. "I thought it was all a trick! If I had known it was a real earthquake——" He did not finish, but shook his head and drew a long breath. "But you started to play a trick on me," he added, quickly.

"So we did, Jake," replied Darry. "But we got bit doing it."

"Yes, we got bit good and proper," added Mark, and then, as he saw the professor approaching, he added in a whisper: "Let's drop the whole thing. What do you say?"

"All right, I'm willing," answered Jake. "Only don't try to play any more tricks on me."

"We won't," answered the others; and then the boys shook hands all around.

From Santiago the young explorers traveled to Los Andes, a small city in the mountains.

"If you care to do so, we can travel to Carracolas," said Professor Strong. "That is at the mouth of the tunnel which is to connect the railroad from Argentina to Chili. We may be able to see them finishing the work on the tunnel."

This interested the boys, and the following day the trip up the mountains was made. They got on what was called the rack railroad, and in

twenty-six miles climbed up over six thousand feet.

"I see the tunnel!" cried Mark, pointing ahead. "It doesn't look very large," he added, somewhat disappointedly.

"But think of the length, two miles, and right under these high mountains!" exclaimed Sam. "That certainly is a marvelous engineering feat."

"They are working from both ends of the tunnel," explained Professor Strong. "They hope to meet soon."

"If they haven't made any miscalculations," was Hockley's comment.

Let me add here, that no miscalculations were made. Soon after the visit of the young explorers the final wall of the great tunnel was blasted away; and to-day trains are running regularly on all the sections of this railroad, from Valparaiso on the Pacific to Buenos Aires on the Atlantic.

Several of the boys were anxious to do a little exploring around the mouth of the tunnel, and Sam wished very much to pick up some geological specimens. They wandered hither and thither, until Jake, Darry, and Mark declared they were tired. Sam kept on, up a cliff side, and Frank went with

him. They passed around a bend and were thus shut off from the view of the others.

A quarter of an hour went by and in the meantime the professor, who had been talking with one of the railroad engineers, came to the boys who were resting.

"Where are the others?" he asked, but before any of them could answer, there came a cry from a distance.

"It's from Frank!" exclaimed Darry.

"Yes, and he is in trouble of some sort!" added Mark. "He is calling for help!"

CHAPTER XIX

FAREWELL TO THE ANDES

ALL ran forward in the direction of the cliff. They could hear Frank but faintly, and at first were unable to locate him.

“Frank! Frank! Where are you?” yelled Mark, at the top of his lungs.

“Here I am! This way, to the left of the cliff!” was the answer.

The boys below hurried in that direction, and then came upon Sam. The boy from Boston had his hands full of stones he had picked up for geological specimens. He had just emerged from a hollow in the cliff side and looked somewhat bewildered.

“Is Frank calling?” he asked. “What is the matter?”

“Yes, he is calling, but we can’t locate him,” returned Darry.

“There he is!” burst from Mark. “I see him—on the tree yonder.”

All gazed in the direction he pointed out, and there beheld Frank perched on one of the upper limbs of a tree that grew out of the top of the cliff. He had a slender stick in one hand, and was making wild passes in front of him.

"What's the trouble?" called out Mark.

"A condor! It wants to attack me!"

"A condor!" cried several of the others.

"There it is!" yelled Darry, and at that instant the vulture-bird hove into sight. It was of immense size, with a stretch of wings seven to eight feet from tip to tip. It was black in appearance, with some spots of white, and had a long, bare throat and cruel-looking hooked beak.

"The condor is going to attack Frank!" screamed Jake, and, as he spoke, the great bird swooped close to the youth in the tree. Frank thrashed around with his stick, hitting the creature on one wing, and the condor circled off, to prepare for another attack.

"Let us see if we cannot shoot it!" said Professor Strong, and he drew his pistol, and the boys also brought forth their weapons.

"Be careful that you don't hit Frank!" warned Sam.

“Frank, why don’t you shoot it?” yelled Darry, his voice trembling with excitement.

“I dropped my pistol,” was the reply. “Oh, shoot it, somebody!”

Again the condor circled closer. It was evidently hungry, and the passes Frank had made with the stick had angered it. It came down in a straight line for the youth’s head, as if to land there and claw him to death.

Crack! crack! crack! One pistol after another was discharged in rapid succession. The condor was hit in the wings, and in one foot, and uttered shrill cries of pain and anger. Then it circled off, higher and higher, and presently was lost to view in the distance.

“Do you think it will come back?” asked Mark, anxiously.

“I hardly think so,” answered Professor Strong. “If it is badly hurt, it will be afraid.”

“Better come down now, Frank!” shouted Mark.

“I will—just as fast as I can,” was the reply. “But it is rather dangerous climbing around here.”

Frank came down the tree with care, and it took him several minutes to descend to the foot of the



AGAIN THE CONDOR CIRCLED CLOSER.—Page 202.

cliff. His clothing was torn, and he had several scratches on one hand.

"However did the condor happen to attack you?" questioned Jake.

"It was in the tree and evidently asleep when I came up," answered Frank. "I couldn't make out just what it was, and so climbed up to see. Then, of a sudden, it woke up, uttered a shrill screech, and commenced to attack me. I had the stick, and I slashed around with that. Then it sailed off, and I thought it was gone. But it came sailing back, and then I began to yell for help."

"Perhaps it smelt the blood on your hand," suggested Sam.

"Condors do not usually attack human beings, outside of small children," said Professor Strong. "They prefer to attack lambs and goats, and they often live on nothing but carrion. It may be that this condor was very hungry. I have heard it said that condors prefer to live in very high altitudes, usually remaining in the mountains at the top of the range. But often they cannot find food so high up, and then they come lower, even down into the valleys among the farms."

They rested for a while at the foot of the cliff,

and Frank's scratches were dressed. They kept their eyes open for the condor, but it did not again appear.

That evening found the young explorers and their tutor once more at Santiago. Here it was finally decided that they should rest for the remainder of the week, and then take the train as far eastward as possible in the mountains, and then travel on muleback and horseback, into the interior of Argentina.

"That will give us a taste of the great pampas, or prairies, of the country," said Amos Strong. "We can visit some of the *estancias*, or ranches, and become closely acquainted with the cowboys, who, down here, are called *gauchos*. When we grow tired of riding on the pampas, we can make for one of the towns along the line of the railroad, and finish the journey to Buenos Aires in a parlor car."

"Say, a ride on the pampas will suit me down to the ground!" cried Darry, enthusiastically. "Oh, I wish I was there right now!"

"Give me the parlor car," was Jake's comment.

"Perhaps you'd like to go ahead to Buenos Aires and wait for us," suggested Mark.

“No, I’ll go where the rest go,” was the quick reply. “I shouldn’t mind visiting a ranch in Argentina, but I don’t want to stay too long.”

“Argentina is a marvelous country,” said Professor Strong. “Years ago it was little known, but to-day it sends immense quantities of meat and grain to Europe, and to many other portions of the globe.”

“As much as the United States?” questioned Sam.

“Yes, Samuel, strange as it may appear, Argentina is now the leader in the export of foodstuffs. And this is not so strange when you consider that Argentina has stretches of pampas as broad as any of the prairies of our own country, and that thousands of the inhabitants grow nothing but grain and cattle. The area of the country is over a million and an eighth square miles, four times the size of Chili. If cut up, it would make about twenty-five States the size of Pennsylvania.”

“Gracious! that’s some size!” murmured Jake, as he well remembered how large his own State was.

“Roughly speaking, Argentina is twenty-two hundred miles long, and its greatest width is about

one thousand miles. Can any of you tell me how it is bounded? ”

“ I think I can,” answered Sam. “ On the north by Bolivia, on the west and south by Chili, and on the east by Paraguay, Brazil, Uruguay, and the Atlantic Ocean.”

“ That is correct. Now, who can name the principal cities? ”

“ The principal city is Buenos Aires,” came promptly from Jake.

“ And after that? ”

“ Rosario, Tucuman, and Mendoza,” answered Mark.

“ That is correct. Now what about the principal river? ”

“ That is the Paraña, on which Rosario is located,” answered Darry.

“ You are right, Dartworth, and it is truly a large stream, being navigable by large steamers for a distance of several hundred miles, and by smaller craft a distance of two thousand miles—away into Brazil, in fact.”

“ It seems to me we are striking some big rivers down here,” remarked Frank. “ The Amazon, the Orinoco, and now the Paraña.”

“There are, of course, numerous other rivers, like the Salado, which flows into the Paraña, the Colorado, and the Negro,” went on the tutor. “There are also a number of lakes of fair size, and four of these are of salt water.”

“Shall we see any more mountains?” asked Darry.

“Not after we leave the Andes. To the eastward, where we shall travel, the country is made up almost entirely of the rolling pampas. In the south, in what is called Patagonia, there are also immense plains, but there are likewise immense mountains, including the Aconcaguas, the highest peaks in America.”

As the party did not wish to be encumbered with too much baggage, they sold or gave away some of the things they had with them, and others were shipped home by express. This done, they left Santiago, and traveled by train into the mountains until they reached a settlement not far from the mouth of the railroad tunnel. Then they took to horses, in company with a trustworthy guide, and the trip over the Andes was begun.

“Our first stop will be at Mendoza,” said Amos Strong. “That is the center of the grape-growing

industry of Argentina. We can visit the public buildings and also some of the vineyards, which are very interesting."

"I've heard of the immense vineyards they have there," said Sam. "One guidebook said one vineyard was over a mile long!"

"I do not doubt it," answered Amos Strong. "They grow immense quantities of grapes, and Italians and Frenchmen come all the way from Europe at certain seasons of the year to look after the fruit and help to make wine."

The trip over the Andes was as full of interest as it had ever been. They rested one day on the boundary line between Chili and Argentina, and Mark took a photograph of an immense statue located there, and known as the Christus of the Andes.

"What a grand statue!" murmured Frank, as he took off his cap, while the others did the same, and the native guide knelt to say a brief prayer. The statue represented Christ in a flowing robe, with a tall cross in one hand and the other hand held out in a blessing.

"That statue has quite a history," said Amos Strong, when they had resumed their journey. "It is not alone a religious emblem, but symbolizes the

peace between Chili and Argentina. It was cast from the metal from cannons of both nations."

"It is a pity they don't have more such peace emblems throughout the world," was Mark's comment. "I think war is barbarous!"

"So do I," added Sam. "I think the greatest hero of the future will be the man of Peace."

"And Arbitration," finished Frank. "A war never settled anything excepting the fact that one nation happened to be stronger than another—or had more money to spend."

"I think arbitration will come some day," said Professor Strong. "But not just yet, for the nations have not yet been educated to it, and those in command of armies and navies do not want to let go."

The climb up the Andes to the boundary had been very hard. The slope on the eastern side was more gradual.

"And now you are in Argentina," said the professor.

The trail led to Las Cuevas and, arriving there, they were glad to rest for a day. Then they pushed on to Mendoza.

"Mendoza is now a city of about forty thou-

sand inhabitants, but it is rapidly growing," said Professor Strong. "It was entirely destroyed by an earthquake, in 1861, and about thirteen thousand people lost their lives."

"Don't talk to me about any more earthquakes, I've had enough of them," said Darry, and then looked at Jake and the others. The lank youth grinned, and then of a sudden all the boys burst into a laugh, somewhat to the surprise of their tutor, who, however, being wise, asked no questions.

They found comfortable quarters at Mendoza, and visited not only the public buildings but also several of the immense vineyards, where Mark and the others took some photographs. Then they set out for Cordoba, nearly three hundred miles further eastward.

CHAPTER XX

ON THE PAMPAS

“OUT on the pampas at last!”

It was Darry who uttered the words, and as he spoke, he took up the reins of his steed in one hand, his cap in the other, and set off on a mad gallop over the broad prairies.

It was a beautiful morning, the sun shining brightly, and just sufficient breeze blowing to “make life worth living,” as Frank expressed it. All of the party were in the saddle, and with them were two natives, one to care for the horses and the other to do the cooking.

Mendoza had been left far behind, and that night they had stopped at a small settlement called Meros. All felt in the best of condition, and even Jake’s face showed his contentment.

“This suits Darry,” was Mark’s comment, as he and Frank rode side by side. “He’d rather be on a horse than in the finest parlor car ever built.”

"I see we have left the railroad behind," returned Frank. "And the country begins to look a good deal wilder than it did."

"See the stretches of pampas ahead!" exclaimed Sam. "This is real life in the open, and no mistake."

"This prairie is different from those of our own States," said Professor Strong. "You will notice the grass is quite coarse. Yet the horses and cattle thrive on it, and when the ground is cultivated it produces heavy crops of grain, which are exported all over the world."

Over the pampas galloped the boys, with the professor at their heels, and the two natives not far behind. Amos Strong enjoyed the riding as much as did any of them, and he did not begrudge Darry his fun, when the Western youth gave yell after yell like an Apache Indian. It was only Darry's way of "letting off steam," and the tutor knew it would do him good.

The Western boy had begged that they camp out at least three or four nights, and Professor Strong had put the matter to a vote, and all the boys, even to Jake, had been in favor of it. Jake had lost a good deal of his sourness since the real and artificial

earthquakes, and the others had great hopes that he was going to reform permanently.

"He's getting quite jolly," was the way Sam expressed himself. "I guess that earthquake shook some of the glumness out of him."

They had an invitation to visit the *estancia* of a rich gentleman named Pelos, and they were making their way in that direction. Don Pelos owned many thousands of acres of land, and his herds of cattle were numerous. Professor Strong had met him in Rio de Janeiro, and the two had become quite friendly.

Over the pampas galloped Darry, and the others came at his heels. The Western youth was in his element, and he called on his chums for a race.

"Done!" cried Mark. "But I am afraid you'll beat me out of my boots!"

Side by side they started off, and the others quickly followed. Over the broad pampas thundered the steeds, in the direction of a line of trees and bushes that marked the boundaries of a small river. Far in the distance they could see a herd of cattle, but not a human being but themselves was in sight.

No one in that crowd could ride quite as well as Darry, and the Western youth had picked his horse

with care. Consequently he slowly but surely went ahead, until he was out of hearing of the rest.

"Better come back!" shouted Mark, but Darry paid no attention. It was sweet to ride like the wind, and he hated to have the pleasure come to an end.

The river looked to be less than a mile away. But the atmosphere was so clear that distances were deceptive, and Darry must have covered several miles before he reached the first of the trees and bushes. The shade felt grateful after that run in the sun, and he allowed his steed to proceed along under the trees, although keeping him away from the water until he had cooled off a little.

Closer to the stream the trees and bushes were thicker, and Darry presently discovered that he had lost the main trail, which, on the pampas, had been well marked by horses and cattle. He looked around in perplexity.

"It won't do for me to get lost," he reasoned, and then smiled to himself, as he realized that it would be an easy matter to ride out into the open again, and then up and down the edge of the woods until the trail was again discovered.

He brought his steed to a halt, and as he did so a

distant murmur of voices reached his ears. At first he imagined that some of his chums had come up, and he was about to call to them, when he heard words in broken English that he felt certain did not proceed from any person who was traveling with him.

"Must be some of the natives," he reasoned. "Maybe a camp of the *gauchos* who are tending the cattle in this vicinity. I'll take a look and make sure."

He moved forward slowly, and presently caught sight of a small clearing located directly on the river bank. Here a tiny campfire was burning, and around it half a dozen men were resting and talking.

Darry took one good look at the men and almost uttered a cry, so great was his astonishment. And well might he be amazed, for one of the party was Dan Markel.

"Markel!" murmured the boy. "What in the world can he be doing here?"

His first impulse was to ride forward and confront the fellow from Baltimore. But then he remembered that he was alone, and that it might not be wise to show himself.

"That man wouldn't be here unless there was some reason for it," Darry told himself. "Perhaps I had better keep in the dark, or ride back and tell the others."

He turned his steed into the woods, rode a few paces, and then, dismounting, tied the horse to a tree. Then he went forward again, keeping his body screened by the bushes.

He soon reached a point where he could see and hear quite plainly. He found Markel talking earnestly to the other men, who, in turn, were asking a number of questions.

"The *señor* say there is in the party but six people?" questioned one of the men, evidently a *gaucho*, by his dress.

"Only six, and but one of them a man."

"And they are rich, *señor*?" questioned another, in still more broken English.

"The man is fairly well off, but the parents of the boys are all very wealthy," answered the man from Baltimore. And then he spoke some words in broken Spanish, which Darry could not catch, though he strained his ears to the utmost.

"It is worth trying, Carlos," said one of the *gauchos*, in his native tongue.

"Perhaps, Juan. But we might be shot down doing it—or be captured and put in jail," was the reply.

"Bah! Do not be so weak-kneed!" cried another. "I, for one, would like to make my fortune without tending cattle all my life."

"And a fortune you shall surely have, if you will do as I wish you to," returned Dan Markel.

"How would you get the money?" asked another.

"Easily enough, after you had done your share of the work," answered the man from Baltimore. "It would take time, but the money would arrive sooner or later—and then we would all be rich."

"And would your friends take part?" questioned the *gaucho* called Carlos.

"Certainly. They could help me in arranging about the money. We would have to be very careful in cashing a bank draft, or a money order, or anything like that."

"Better ask for gold," grumbled the man called Juan. "Gold is gold, the world over. Had I my share now, I'd not stay in this forsaken country. I'd go to Buenos Aires and have a good time."

"And I'd go with you," added Carlos. "But

how much could you get and how would you divide it?" And then followed a discussion, the particulars of which Darry could not catch.

But the Western boy had heard enough, and now he made up his mind to retrace his steps, mount his steed, and rejoin his party.

"They are plotting against us," he reasoned. "They are up to some trick, and Markel is leading them. Maybe he has an idea he can make us prisoners and then get our folks to pay a big sum for our release!"

A few steps more brought Darry to the side of his horse. He was in the act of untying the animal, when he suddenly found himself attacked from the rear. A *poncho* was thrown over his head, almost smothering him, and then his hands were bound behind him.

"Don't you dare to make a sound!" was hissed into his ear, and a moment later the blanket was removed and a dirty gag was thrust into his mouth, that he might not cry out.

If the Western youth had been surprised before, he was amazed now, for the two men who had thus unceremoniously made him a prisoner were none other than Paul Radell and the scar-chinned fel-

low, Roberto Olano, the man who had taken Hockley's pocket-book in La Paz.

"What shall we do with him?" asked Roberto Olano, in broken English.

"We'll take him into the woods for the present," answered Radell. "Bring along the horse. Then I'll see how Markel is making out with those *gauchos*. Perhaps they won't do what we want them to."

"I know that class well, and they will do almost anything for money," answered Olano. "But we must be careful, since the others of that party are so close."

Darry heard these words, but could not answer, nor ask any questions. He was hurried through the woods, and, at a distance, bound tightly to a small tree. His horse was tethered near him, and then the two men went off, in the direction of the camp on the bank of the river.

In the meantime the others of Darry's party had kept on the broad trail, and thus they reached the woods at a point somewhat north of where the Western youth had entered it. Here they halted and looked around.

"Wonder where Darry went?" mused Sam.

“He can’t be very far off,” returned Mark. “Let us call to him.”

They called half a dozen times, but no answer came back. Then they continued on through the woods until they reached a spot on the river where there was a ford.

“He may have gone to the other side of the river,” said Jake. “Do you see any fresh hoof-marks?”

All made an examination, but there were so many marks, coming and going, that they could make nothing of them.

“I do not like this turn of affairs,” said Amos Strong, seriously. “He ought to have known enough to wait for us at the edge of the timber.”

“Let us ford the river to see if he isn’t on the other side,” replied Mark, and led the way. The water was scarcely a foot deep at the ford, and all of the horses insisted upon stopping for a drink.

On the opposite side of the river the forest was quite dense. But the trail was broad, so they had little difficulty in making their way along in pairs. As they advanced they frequently gave a call, and once Professor Strong discharged his pistol as a signal.

“Darry would answer that, if he heard it,” said Sam, and now the Boston boy looked very thoughtful. “I am afraid he has gotten into some sort of trouble.”

“Supposing some of us go ahead and some of us return to the river?” suggested Frank. “Then, as soon as Darry is found, we can fire a shot to let the others know.”

This was thought good advice, and while Sam and Mark continued on the broad trail through the forest, Professor Strong, Frank, and Jake turned back to the river bank.

“You may remain here,” said the tutor, presently, to Frank and Jake. “I am going still further back. It is possible he lost the trail before the forest was reached.” And he sped off along the back trail and was soon lost to view.

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

LEFT to himself, Darry tugged away eagerly at the bonds which held him. He did not attempt to cry out, for the gag was fairly tight in his mouth, and he realized that his friends must be some distance away, probably entirely out of hearing.

But the rascals who had made the Western youth a prisoner had done their work well, and all he accomplished by his efforts was to lacerate his wrists until the blood came. Then, realizing that his squirming was useless, he stopped.

"Wonder what they will do with me?" he mused, but try his best he could not answer that question. He realized that he was in the power of men who were thoroughly unscrupulous, and who would probably stop at nothing to accomplish their ends.

"They want to make money out of me," he reasoned. "Most likely they will carry me off to some

out-of-the-way place, and then demand a big sum from father for my release."

A quarter of an hour went by, and then came footsteps behind the boy. Markel and Radell appeared followed by Olano and several of the *gauchos*. As quickly as it could be done, Darry was released from the tree, and placed on the back of his horse. Then the steed was led to a trail running along the river bank.

Darry felt that he must be getting further and further away from his friends, and the thought made his heart sink within him. The further he got away the smaller would be his chances of being rescued.

Yet, try his best, he could think of nothing by which to better his condition. He was absolutely helpless, and at the mercy of those who held him captive.

On and on went the party, along the river bank. At a distance of about half a mile they came to a place where the stream divided, and here they forded over to the patch of forest between the two branches.

"Water leaves no trail," observed Dan Markel, with satisfaction. Then he turned and looked at

Darry, and seeing that the youth was actually suffering from the gag, continued: "If I take that gag away, will you promise to keep quiet? I don't think anybody is within hearing, but we don't care to take chances of being followed."

Darry was willing just then to do anything to get a good breath of air, and he nodded in the affirmative. The gag was thereupon removed, so that he could breathe more freely.

"Markel, where are you taking me?" demanded the boy, when he could speak.

"You had better not ask questions just now, Crane," was the growled-out return. "We can do our talking when we get to where we are going."

"You know it is against the law to treat me in this fashion. Abduction is a serious crime."

"I am taking my chances," answered the man from Baltimore, with an uneasy laugh.

"My friends will be after me. Professor Strong will get aid and run you down."

"He'll have a sweet time of it finding us," put in Paul Radell.

After this there was a period of silence, broken only by some questions put by Markel to the *gauchos* in Spanish. Evidently the cowboys had

agreed to do whatever the man from Baltimore wanted.

Presently the party reached a clearing in the forest. Here there was a rude cabin, now deserted.

"This is the place, *señor*," said one of the *gauchos*, to Markel.

"It's retired enough," was Radell's comment, as he looked around through the forest. "I'd hardly know how to find my way out of here."

Darry was made to dismount, and was again tied to a tree, but this time in such a fashion that he could lie down if he wished to do so. His hands were behind him, and crossed at the wrists, so that he could do little towards releasing himself.

The *gauchos* evidently knew the spot well, for they at once made themselves at home. A camp-fire was built, and one of the number started to cook a meal of some provisions brought along, consisting principally of *charque*, which is jerked beef, and beans and crackers. All also had a drink from a flask of liquor, and then they started to smoke and to talk. They spoke in a jargon peculiarly their own, so that Darry understood but little of what they said, and Markel and Radell were equally in the dark.

"Markel, are you willing to tell me what you intend to do?" demanded Darry, as the man came in front of him and eyed him speculatively.

"Well, if you want to know so much, I am going to pay you back for some of the trouble you caused me in the past," answered the man from Baltimore.

"I never caused you trouble that you didn't deserve," was the Western youth's spirited reply. "If you had acted in an honest manner from the start, there would have been no trouble."

"Bah! it is useless to talk to me like that, Crane. You and your friends got me into many a scrape, and now I am going to pay you back, and with interest."

"What are you going to do?"

"Well, if you want to know, we intend to make all of you prisoners, and then——"

"Say, Dan, why do you tell him so much?" interrupted Paul Radell. "Time enough to go into details later on."

"I should not tell the boy one t'ing," interposed Roberto Olano. "He might possibly escape, an' then he would expose all," and he shook his scarred face decidedly.

"He shan't escape, don't fear," returned Dan Markel.

"I guess I know what you have in mind to do," said Darry, boldly. "You are holding me to get money out of my folks, and that is what you think of doing to the others. Well, I hope my folks don't give you a cent."

"They had better!" growled Markel. "If they don't—well, it will go hard with you, that's all."

"Who are these fellows who are with you?"

"Men who will do just as I want them to."

"Do they belong on the ranches around here?"

"No, they come from a distance."

"Ask the boy about himself, and what his father is worth," came from Radell.

"You can ask all you please, but you'll not get any information from me," returned Darry, firmly.

"You'd better tell."

"Not a word!"

"We'll find a way of making you tell," growled Radell, and then motioned for Markel to come to a distance. Once out of earshot of the lad, the pair talked earnestly for several minutes.

Slowly night came on, and poor Darry was left bound as before. He was given a drink of water,

but no food. He now commenced to realize what the men from Baltimore had in mind to do. They intended to starve him into submission, so that he would tell them anything and everything they wanted to know.

“Oh, what base wretches!” he reasoned. “But they shan’t get anything out of me—I’ll die first!” And he shut his teeth hard.

All of the party but Olano and the *gaucho* called Juan had departed, probably to spy on the movements of Professor Strong and the others. Darry had watched their going with interest, and speculated on what this new move meant.

“Maybe they’ll capture some of the crowd and bring them here,” he reasoned. “Oh, if only I could warn them in some way! But I am afraid I can’t do a thing.”

Juan was evidently sleepy, and it was not long before he rolled himself in his *poncho* and began to snore. Olano sat by a tiny campfire, smoking one cigarette after another, and thinking deeply.

Darry watched the scar-faced man and wished he would go to sleep, too. He commenced to work on his bonds once more, determined to get free if such a thing were possible.

"You are a rich boy, yes?" said Roberto Olano, presently.

"You may think so if you wish," answered Darry, coldly.

"You fader pay well to have you go free?"

"I hope he won't pay a cent."

"You like to be prisonair, yes? Maybe you like to starve, too?" went on the man, with a leer.

"You won't dare to starve me."

"We starve if it is of a necessity."

"Olano, do you know that we know you robbed one of our party in La Paz?" went on Darry, after a pause.

"Ha! Not so, not so!" stormed the scar-faced man.

"It is so. You took that pocket-book from Jake Hockley, down in the market place."

"Bah! You talk too much!" growled Olano. "If you say——" he broke off short.

From a distance had come a peculiar whistle. Whether it was a signal or not Darry did not know, but evidently Roberto Olano was much interested. He moved as if to awaken the sleeping *gaucho*, then changed his mind, kicked out the campfire, and walked out of sight among the trees.

If he was to escape, now was Darry's chance, and frantically he continued to work at his bonds. The ropes at his wrists finally gave way a little and he managed to slip his hands loose. Then he worked at the ropes on his feet and got those unfastened.

Juan was still sleeping, but there was no telling how soon Roberto Olano would return. The youth looked around for his horse, but the steed had been taken away by his captors.

Another signal rang out, and now Darry heard the low murmur of voices. Some of the *gauchos* were returning to the camp, and with them was Paul Radell.

The Western youth realized that he had no time to lose. As silently as a shadow he glided in among the trees. He could not see where he was going, and passed within a few feet of Radell and one of the cowboys. The latter held a torch in his hand, and had he happened to look in the right direction, Darry must have been discovered.

But he was not seen, and as the men passed into the camp, Darry sped deeper into the forest. He did not know where he was going and, just then, did not care, his one thought being to get as far from his enemies as possible.

The youth had covered less than a hundred feet when a shout reached his ears, telling him that his escape had been discovered. Then came a call for Olano.

"Where is the boy?" demanded Radell.

"I know not," stammered Roberto Olano, in amazement. "He was here but a minute ago, bound as you left him."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes, yes! I was with him until I heard your whistle. Then I walked forward to make sure that all was well."

Juan was kicked awake, and he was as much astonished as Olano. Neither could tell how Darry had gotten away.

"This is a pretty mess!" murmured Paul Radell. "Markel won't like it, I can tell you that. We must search the forest and recapture that boy! If he gets away and reaches his friends he may spoil our whole game!"

"I will do anything you say," murmured Olano.

"I will find the boy if it can be done," came from Juan, in Spanish.

"Let us spread out in a circle, and each arm himself with a torch," continued Radell. "He cannot

be far off, and if he went down to the river we'll be bound to strike his trail sooner or later. Come, the sooner we get after him the better."

And then the hunt for Darry commenced in earnest.

CHAPTER XXII .

THE BANDITS OF THE PAMPAS

PROFESSOR STRONG was much worried. He felt instinctively that something had gone wrong with Darry, and he wondered what it could be. He plunged into the forest at various points, and at last touched on a trail that looked to be fresh. He was gone the best part of an hour, and when he returned to where he had left Frank and Jake, his face was full of concern. Mark and Sam had also returned, and all of the young explorers looked inquiringly at the tutor.

"I am afraid that something serious has happened to Dartworth," said Amos Strong.

"Did you get any track of him?" questioned Mark, eagerly.

"I did in a way. I followed his horse's hoof-marks on a side trail, and they led to a place where there were a number of other footprints, of men as well as horses. It looked to me as if there had been

something of a struggle, or as if a horse had run away. Then I followed another trail to a camp along the river bank. Here a number of people had stopped, and also some horses. At the camp I picked this up."

"It's Darry's notebook!" exclaimed Sam.

"Exactly, and it was lying close to a tree, and the bark of the tree was worn, as if some animal or a human being had been fastened there. There were footmarks close to the tree."

"Do you think Darry has been made a prisoner by somebody?" cried Jake, and his face grew pale with apprehension.

"It looks so to me, otherwise why does he not return, or send some word to us? If he was hurt and met some others, he would send somebody to us with news."

"Unless he was unconscious," put in Frank. "That horse he was riding was a mighty frisky animal. Maybe he ran away and threw Darry, and knocked him unconscious, and the folks who found him didn't know about us."

"I fired my pistol several times and called out, too, but nobody answered me," pursued Amos Strong. "The whole matter looks very bad to

me," and his serious face plainly showed how much the tutor was worried.

"Why should anybody hold Darry a prisoner?" asked Jake.

"Well, you know what we heard before!" exclaimed one of the others. "This may be part of a deep game, hatched out by Markel and Radell."

The others could scarcely credit this, yet they agreed it might be so. The main question was, What should they do next?

"Well, one thing is certain," said Sam, decidedly. "We can't go ahead without Darry."

"Of course not," seconded Mark.

"But what are you going to do?" demanded Jake. "We can't sit here and suck our thumbs."

"Do you want to go on without Darry, Jake?" asked Frank.

"Certainly not. But I don't know what to do. It will be night before long."

"Well, we can camp out here as well as anywhere," was Mark's comment.

"Yes, the bank of the river will afford an excellent camping-spot," answered Professor Strong.

They talked the matter over a while longer, and then concluded to go into camp close to the main

trail and the river. Wood was gathered by the natives, who had remained near the river during the hunt, and a brisk blaze was started up.

"We'll keep a good fire going," said Mark. "Then, if Darry starts to find us, he can do it."

The native cook prepared an excellent meal, but nobody was in the humor to eat a great deal. Even Jake was downcast and shook his head a number of times.

"I reckon we missed it by not keeping to the railroad," he said. "Horsebacking is good enough, but it doesn't pay if we are going to have such trouble as this."

Although all were tired out, only the natives felt like sleeping. The others sat around the campfire, discussing the situation from every possible point of view.

"For all we know, Darry may be dead," said Sam, dolefully. "His horse may have thrown him into the river on the rocks, and he may be drowned."

"Let us hope for the best," answered Professor Strong. "As soon as it is light we can institute another search."

As it grew later, one after another of the boys

dropped into a doze. Sam was the only one to remain wide-awake, for Darry was very dear to him, and he could not get the Western youth out of his mind.

"Don't you wish to sleep, Samuel?" questioned the professor, who was walking up and down by the river, nervously.

"I can't do it, sir," was the reply. "Oh, Professor, supposing something serious has happened to Darry! And just when we are on the very end of this long trip, too!"

"It is too bad, Samuel; but you must keep up your courage."

Another hour went by, and the professor was in the act of replenishing the campfire, which had burned low, when he paused as a sound from a distance reached his ears. The night was very quiet, and noises could be heard a long way off.

"I believe it is somebody on horseback!" he murmured to himself.

"What did you say, sir?" questioned Sam.

"I hear something—I do not know what it is."

Both listened and heard the sounds coming closer. Then, through the night air, floated a well-known musical whistle.

"It's Darry!" almost shouted the boy from Boston. "Hello, Darry!" he yelled. "This way!" And then he gave a similar whistle—one all the boys practiced constantly and knew well.

The whistle was repeated, and answered, and soon those around the campfire saw a figure on horseback approaching. It was truly Darry, and all of his friends ran forward to greet him.

"Where in the world have you been?"

"You look tired to death!"

"What is the matter with your wrists?"

These and other questions were asked, as Darry rode into camp and dropped rather than jumped from his steed.

"One question at a time, please!" he gasped, as he sank on the ground. "And first of all, please give me a drink of water, and then something to eat. I am half starved!"

"You shall have all you want," declared Professor Strong, and at once ordered the native cook to make coffee and prepare a meal. In the meantime Darry was given a drink of water, and his lacerated wrists were dressed.

"I don't know if those rascals are following me or not," he declared, after he had told of how he

had been made a prisoner. "When they found I had gotten away they were very angry, and I had all I could do to keep from being discovered. Then, by pure luck, I stumbled across my horse, tied to a tree; and here I am. I knew you must be somewhere on the trail and near the river, and I rode in this direction until I spotted the gleam of the camp-fire."

"Those fellows are certainly rascals," was Mark's comment. "And those cowboys are evidently as bad as the others."

"Don't you think we had better move on, now Darry is here?" questioned Jake, nervously. "I don't want to be made a prisoner."

"I doubt if they would dare to attack us while we are together," said Professor Strong. "But if you wish, we can move to some spot across the river, where it would be more difficult for them to locate us, especially in the dark. Then all of us may feel more like going to sleep for the rest of the night."

Accordingly, as soon as Darry had rested and had had something to eat, they broke camp and moved along the trail and over the ford, and then into the forest. It was decided to light no

fire, and all took turns at standing guard, Darry excepted.

Nobody came to disturb them, and when the sun arose all was as peaceful and quiet around the camp as could be expected. While the professor and the boys had breakfast, they plied Darry with questions, and he told them all he knew of the plans of Markel and those with him.

"What we ought to do is to report this at the nearest town," said Frank, "and have Markel, Radell, Olano, and the others locked up. As long as those chaps are at large we won't be safe."

"Those *gauchos* do not belong around here, I found out," said Darry. "They come from the northern part of Argentina, from the Grand Chaco, as it is called. They are a wild set, and some of them have Indian blood in their veins. Their leader is a man named Anzenos, but he is not with them just now."

"Anzenos!" cried Professor Strong, and at the mention of the name even the two natives looked up with interest.

"Yes. Have you ever heard of him?"

"Yes, Dartworth, I have. Anzenos is nothing but a bandit, roaming the entire western portion of

Argentina. Years ago he was a mail carrier, and it is said that he delights in holding up the mail whenever he thinks it will pay him to do so. If those *gauchos* were under that fellow, they were undoubtedly bandits also. I am very glad that you escaped from their clutches."

"Perhaps Anzenos will collect other members of his band and come after the lot of us!" cried Jake. "I think the best thing we can do is to move on to some city, and then get on the train for Buenos Aires."

"There is no city near here, Jacob. We might turn back."

"Oh, I wouldn't turn back," put in Mark. "We are armed, and on the line of a number of large ranches and villages. I don't think they'd dare to attack us while we kept together, and especially if they saw our firearms."

"I don't believe in showing the white feather," put in Frank.

"Nor do I," added Sam, "and I shan't turn back unless Darry and the professor want it."

"I'll go ahead, if the rest say so," answered the boy from the West. "Maybe now that I've escaped from the bunch, they'll get scared—think-

ing we'll set the authorities after 'em—and clear out for good."

"Let us hope that will be the case," said Amos Strong. "Then it is settled that we go ahead, at least as far as Don Pelos's ranch, which we ought to reach day after to-morrow. When we are safe at the ranch, we can decide upon what is best to do next."

The forward move was begun a little later, and they traveled steadily until noon, when they rested in the shade of some trees surrounding a spring of pure, cold water. They saw several herds of cattle, and also a drove of horses, some of them white in color.

"They are the wild horses of the pampas," explained Professor Strong. "And they are about as unmanageable as you can imagine. I have never had any experience with them, but it is said that they are worse than our own Western broncos."

"I don't see how anything could be worse than a bucking bronco," said Darry. "I'd like to try one once, just to see."

"You had better leave them alone," returned the tutor.

"I shall for the present, sir," replied Darry, with

a grin. "I don't believe a fellow could get within gunshot of them, they are so wild and scary."

During the afternoon they made good progress, and about five o'clock passed a caravan moving slowly over a cross trail leading southward. The caravan was made up of about a dozen *carretas*, or carts, each drawn by four oxen, wearing yokes of heavy timber. The carts were two-wheeled affairs, wide and roomy, and with big wooden wheels all of six feet in diameter. Alongside of each *carreta* strode the driver, with his prod and his long, snake-like whip, shouting lustily to his team, to keep them in motion. As the trail was dry, the air was filled with dust, and dust covered the whole turnout.

A tall, weatherbeaten rancher was at the head of the caravan, and to this fellow Professor Strong related the particulars of the encounter with the band under Anzenos. At the mention of that bandit's name, the caravan leader was much disturbed.

"They are bold, bloodthirsty villains," he said in Spanish. "Only last week they shot down some mail carriers and robbed them. There is a price on their heads. But I doubt if they will be captured. They know too well how to keep themselves hidden."

CHAPTER XXIII

A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE

"Boys, I think we had better keep together after this," said Professor Strong, after they had parted company with those forming the caravan. "I do not consider it will be safe for any of you to ride off alone."

"Do you really think Markel and those outlaws will follow us?" questioned Jake, anxiously.

"I do not know, Jacob. That fellow, Anzenos, has a reputation for holding up anybody who has money, and if Markel and Radell tell him your folks are wealthy and will pay a handsome ransom for your release, he and his band may do all in their power to make us prisoners."

"Can't we get to the railroad and get on the cars?"

"Oh, let us go ahead as we originally planned!" cried Frank. "I don't want to sit in the stuffy cars if I can ride on horseback."

Again the matter was discussed, and all but Hockley were in favor of continuing on horseback.

"The railroad is quite a distance from here," said the tutor. "And it would take almost as long to reach the nearest station as to get to Don Pelos's *estancia*. If we keep together and watch out, I think we shall be safe."

They rode on until nearly sunset, and then went into camp beside a stream that was little more than a brook. Here were several immense *ombu* trees, the branches stretching out on all sides for many yards. Beside the brook the pampas grass was thick, and here the horses proceeded to make themselves at home.

"I think it best that we keep a good guard all night," said Amos Strong. "I am going to divide our party up, so that two of our number will be awake all the time. One can be stationed at the north and east of the camp and the other at the south and west. There will be no moon, but I think the stars will all be out, so it will be fairly light."

"What about a campfire?" asked Sam. "Won't that attract attention, after it gets dark?"

"Yes, and I think, as soon as supper is cooked, we will let it go out."

Ever since the name of Anzenos had been mentioned the natives had been plainly nervous, and they built the fire and cooked the evening meal in a fashion that indicated plainly that they had their minds elsewhere.

"Anzenos is a great, heartless wretch," said one of the natives, to Sam. "He stops at nothing to get what he wants."

"It's a pity the authorities can't catch him," replied the boy.

"He leads a charmed life, so I have been told," was the assertion. "Times without number has he been shot at, and never once has a bullet reached him."

"That is a common rumor regarding all bandits," said Professor Strong. "I heard the same story once of a bandit in Mexico. All the natives in a town declared that he had been shot at fifty times, and never been hurt. But the very next week he held up a Texan on the highway, and that man drew his six-shooter and put two bullets into him, killing him almost instantly. Sooner or later this man, Anzenos, will meet the fate he seems to deserve."

Supper was eaten, and then the campfire was allowed to die down, Professor Strong putting on a

little damp wood and a few wet leaves, to make a smudge, to drive away the mosquitoes and the pampas flies, which were numerous. The horses were securely tethered, and then one by one the boys turned in, Professor Strong and one of the natives doing duty first as sentinels.

About midnight Frank and Sam found themselves on guard, to do duty until three o'clock. Each of the lads had had quite a nap, and consequently felt wide awake. So far nothing had come to disturb the travelers, and it looked as if the remainder of the night might pass without interruption.

"I don't believe Markel and that bunch know where we are," said Sam to his chum, in a low tone, so as not to disturb the others.

"We mustn't be too sure of it, Frank. From what Darry says, they may be hot on our trail. Markel is evidently very angry over what has taken place in the past, and is willing to do anything to get the best of us."

The two boys continued to discuss the situation in low tones, and then each took a short walk up and down the stream and over the pampas beyond.

Sam was moving along slowly, looking out on the

pampas, when a low whistle from Frank reached his ears. Immediately he hurried to where his chum was standing, in an attitude of keen suspense.

"What is it? What do you see?" he whispered.

"Something out there, moving," was the low reply, and the New York lad pointed to the pampas south of the largest of the *ombu* trees.

Both looked "with all eyes," but could see nothing. They waited for fully a minute, but not a sound broke the stillness.

"Perhaps you were mistaken," said Sam.

"No, I am sure I saw something, sneaking along through the grass," answered Frank.

Again they looked and waited, and thus fully five minutes went by. Then, from one of the horses came a snort, as of fear.

"It must be some animal," whispered Frank. "If it was a man, that horse wouldn't carry on that way."

"What sort of an animal could it be?"

"Oh, anything from a pampas dog to a jaguar."

"Got your pistol ready?"

"Sure. Have you?"

"Of course. But I'd rather have the professor's rifle—if it's some big beast."

"Then go and get it, I'll stay on guard here."

The rifle was brought forward, and once more the two youths waited. Then came another snort from the horses, and of a sudden there was a wild commotion among all of the steeds.

"It's something, sure!" cried Frank. "Come on!" And he headed for the spot where the horses had been tethered.

The commotion increased, and the noise was so great that everybody in the camp was awakened. As the two boys drew closer, they saw one of the horses running away, dragging the lasso that had held him at his heels. Then another steed followed, bounding over the pampas madly.

"It's a big beast—I think it's a jaguar!" cried Frank, and then he opened fire, and Sam quickly followed.

They did not wish to hit any of their horses, and so had to aim with care. The jaguar—for such it really was—had leaped for one of the remaining horses. That steed whirled around and planted a hoof in the beast's side.

Crack! crack! went the rifle and the pistol in the hands of Sam and Frank, and the jaguar was struck in the flank. Thinking an enemy was at its heels, it gave a vicious snap in that direction. At the same

time the horse it had attacked gave a wild snort and, breaking loose, followed its two mates on a wild gallop over the pampas.

By this time all the men and boys in the camp were on their feet. Professor Strong reached for his rifle, and, not finding it, got his pistol.

"What is it?"

"Are those rascals attacking us?"

"Are the horses running away?"

These and other questions filled the air. Then Mark saw the midnight visitor and gave a yell:

"A jaguar! Look out, he is headed for camp!"

"Oh!" screamed Jake, and then the lank youth suddenly shut his teeth hard and felt for his pistol. He had made up his mind to be as brave as anybody, no matter what the consequences. Several more shots rang out, and the jaguar was sent whirling on its back. It fairly screamed with pain, and the remaining horses snorted in terror.

"Keep back! Don't let him reach you!" called out Amos Strong. He fired his pistol, and Jake also took a shot, and so did each of the others.

Such treatment was too much for the jaguar. It tried to get up, but could not, and so rolled over and over, screaming and spitting ferociously. In

its pain it did not notice the smoldering campfire, and so rolled right into this, scattering the embers in all directions. But then a final bullet from the repeating rifle passed through its head, and with a quiver it stretched out and lay still.

"Is—is it dead?" questioned Jake. He was so agitated he could scarcely speak.

"I think it is," answered the professor. "Wait a minute until I light a torch and make sure."

It was soon ascertained that the jaguar was dead, and then all present breathed more freely. It was a long but gaunt creature, and had evidently been suffering from intense hunger.

"They come around camps and attack horses only when very hungry," explained Professor Strong.

"Do you suppose there are any more of them around?" asked Darry.

"I do not know. I trust not."

"Three of the horses are gone!" cried Sam.

"What are we going to do about that?"

"We'll have to catch them," answered Mark.

"Perhaps they didn't run very far."

Everybody in the camp was so wide awake that further sleep was out of the question. All sat around the smudge, talking the situation over.

They hoped the runaway horses would come back of their own free will, but in this they were mistaken; not a single steed showed himself.

"Well, we can't go on very well without the horses," said Frank. "What are we to do?"

"We'll simply have to find 'em," answered Darry. "I'll see if I can't round 'em up as soon as it is daylight."

At early dawn he and the professor sallied forth, on the backs of two of the remaining horses.

"You stay right here until we get back," said Amos Strong to the others. "And don't allow any strangers to come near unless you feel certain they are friendly."

"All right; we'll be on guard," answered Mark.

An hour went by, and the others got breakfast, consisting largely of some delicious fish caught in the brook. Then the time dragged along slowly until nearly noon.

"I see somebody coming!" cried Sam at last. He was shading his eyes and looking across the pampas to the northward.

"Two persons on horseback, and with other horses by their side," cried Jake.

"The professor and Darry," supplemented

Frank. "And they are riding just as fast as the horses can go!"

"It's queer they should ride so fast," was Sam's comment. "Those horses will be all tired out, and they won't want to do anything but walk this afternoon, when we continue our journey."

"Maybe they have news of some sort!" cried Frank. "They certainly act as if they were in a hurry."

On and on came Professor Strong and Darry, the hoofbeats sounding out quite plainly over the broad pampas. The boys and even the natives watched their approach with keen interest. As he came more plainly into view, Darry waved his hand at them. The tutor, however, kept doggedly on until he was within a few yards, then he stopped short and leaped to the ground, and the boy from the West followed.

"Boys, we have got to leave here at once!" said Amos Strong. "Pack up everything as quickly as possible, and we'll be off."

"What's the matter?" asked the others, in a breath.

"The matter is that that fellow, Anzenos, and his band are after us," answered Darry.

CHAPTER XXIV

CHASED ACROSS THE PAMPAS

THE announcement that the bandit Anzenos was after them, filled the others of the party with consternation.

"How did you learn this?" asked Mark.

"We have no time to tell the story now," answered Amos Strong. "Let us pack up as quickly as it can be done and be off, and we'll tell what we know when we are on the way."

The tutor was evidently much worried, and knowing how bravely he usually acted, the others felt that the situation must be unusually grave.

"I—I hope they don't catch us," muttered Jake, as he helped to pack up the camping outfit. "Do you think there are many of them in the band?"

"There are at least a dozen," answered Darry.

"Are Markel and Radell with them?" asked Sam.

"Yes, and Olano too."

But little more was said just then, everybody paying attention to packing up, so that nothing might be left behind. The natives were almost white with fear.

"Anzenos will kill us all!" muttered the cook.
"Oh, that I were back in the village again!"

"I do not think he wishes to kill anybody," answered Professor Strong. "He has been informed by Markel and the others that we are very wealthy, and he is going to do what he can to capture us and hold us for heavy ransom."

At last the traps were packed up, and all leaped into the saddle. A last look was taken around, and then off they galloped, Professor Strong leading the way.

"Are we to ride for Don Pelos's ranch?" asked Frank.

"I hardly think that will be best," answered the tutor. "In some manner those rascals have discovered that we were bound for that place, and they will doubtless try to intercept us. We'll have to take to one of the trails leading to the southeastward, and trust to luck to reach some other place of safety."

The two natives were consulted, but they could

give little information about the trails other than that which they had been following. Both demurred when it came to leaving the main trail.

"We go to the Pelos *estancia*, yes," said one. "No go that way," and he pointed with his hand.

"We are going that way," answered Amos Strong, sharply.

"No go that way," said the other native. "Go this way," and he pointed to the main trail.

The tutor tried to argue, but the natives were stubborn. As said before, they were badly frightened, and their one thought was to leave those for whom Anzenos and his band were seeking. They demanded their pay, and on receiving this, said they would go back to the village where they belonged.

"Very well, you can go," answered the professor, coldly. "I want no such cowards in my company."

"You will see who is the coward—when you face the dreaded Anzenos," cried one of the natives, in Spanish, and then both wheeled their horses about, and galloped off on the back trail.

"Do you think they'll tell that bandit how we are headed?" asked Darry.

"Hardly," answered the tutor. "They fear him

so greatly that they will do all in their power to keep out of his sight."

As the professor and the boys rode on over the pampas, the tutor and Darry told of their adventures while looking for the missing horses. After circling around for several miles, they had discovered the steeds at a distance, cropping the pampas grass. The horses would not let them get close, however, until they had chased the steeds into some timber.

They had been on the point of returning with the horses, when they chanced to see a camp at a distance. This was close to some rocks, and, leaving the horses tied to some trees, they had climbed up the rocks, to see who was in the camp. They had soon recognized Markel and Radell and, a little later, Olano, because of the scar on his chin. Then they had noticed a gaudily-attired horseman moving about among the *gauchos*, talking earnestly to them, and had heard this fellow addressed as *Capitan* Anzenos.

"As soon as I knew the fellow was the bandit leader, I grew anxious to learn what he was talking about," said Professor Strong. "We listened closely, and I made out that he was telling his men

what Markel and Radell had said, that we were all wealthy travelers, and if we could be made prisoners and carried off to some out-of-the-way spot in this locality, no doubt our relatives would pay princely sums for our release. Markel and Radell had evidently told their story well, for Anzenos was very much interested, and soon he got all of his followers excited. Every man agreed to chase after us and run us down, and they were getting ready to start when we came away, so they are probably already on our track."

"Do you think they can be very close to us?" asked Jake, and looked back along the trail, as if expecting the bandits to show themselves then and there.

"No, I think we have a pretty fair start," answered Amos Strong. "But I noticed that they have the best of horses, and all of them must know how to ride well—I mean the *gauchos*. Of course, Markel and Radell, and probably Olano, can ride no better than we can."

"If only we could reach some large ranch, where the owner would protect us!" sighed Frank.

"The trouble is, one does not know whom to trust here," answered the professor. "Ranch owners

are afraid of men like Anzenos, because of the damage he can do to their herds of cattle, and to their horses. We might go to some *ranchero* for protection, and he might play right into the hands of our enemies."

"Then you want to head for one of the towns?" asked Mark.

"I think that would be best."

On and on they went, over the broad pampas. The brook with its big trees had been left behind, and on all sides were the boundless prairies, upon which the sun shone with scarcely a cloud. Occasionally they saw some cattle at a distance, but that was all.

The day was drawing to a close, and they had somewhat slackened their pace, for their horses were tired, when Mark, who had turned around, to get a good view of what was behind, uttered an exclamation.

"What is it, Mark?" questioned Frank, who was nearest to his chum.

"Look yonder, Frank! Are those horsemen, or only some cattle?"

Frank studied the distant objects with care for several seconds.

"They look like horsemen to me," he said at last. "But they are a long way off."

The attention of the others was called to the objects, and Professor Strong quickly brought into play the field-glass he carried. He took one good look.

"They are after us!" he exclaimed. "And they are riding just as hard as they can!"

"How many of them?" asked Mark.

"Fourteen or fifteen, and perhaps more."

"Are they headed this way?" came from Darry.
"Maybe they haven't seen us yet."

"Yes, they are coming straight for us."

"Then all that is left to do is to outride 'em!" cried Frank. "Can we do that?" he asked, anxiously.

"We can try," answered the tutor, grimly.

"Oh, if only we didn't have our camping outfit!" exclaimed Jake.

"Well, they have their outfit, too," answered Darry. "They carry it with them wherever they go, so on that score we are even. Come on! We've no time to lose!"

Nobody needed any urging, and in a moment the professor and the boys were galloping across the

pampas at the best speed they could get out of their steeds.

It was a truly thrilling chase. Led by Anzenos, the *gauchos* came on like the wind, yelling, and occasionally firing a pistol in the air, just to scare our friends. As close behind the bandits as possible rode Markel, Radell, and Olano. They wished to see the travelers made captives, but they did not wish to run any chance of being shot down if the objects of their pursuit showed fight.

"Do you think we'll catch them?" asked Radell, when those ahead were in plain sight.

"I don't see how it can be otherwise," answered Dan Markel. "Their horses—or at least some of them—must be about used up, while ours are still fresh."

"It will be a great event if we do capture them," went on Paul Radell.

"It will mean a barrel of money for all of us."

"Provided we can work the game properly."

"Oh, you leave that end of it to me. Once we get those fellows in our power, I'll show you what I can do," boasted Markel.

"That captain of the bandits will want the lion's share of the ransom, Dan."

"But he won't get it, Paul. Just you wait and see."

The chase continued, and slowly but surely those in pursuit drew closer to our friends. But they were still too far away to make a shot effective, so Professor Strong did not fire, even as a warning. But his rifle was ready for use, and his snapping eyes indicated that he was prepared for any trouble that might arise.

"I wish no bloodshed, if it can be avoided," he said. "But I'd rather fight than have those fellows make me a prisoner."

"So would I," came from Mark, Frank, and Darry.

"Well, we don't want to be shot down," interposed Jake. "It would be better to let them take us prisoners than have anything like that happen."

"I see something ahead!" cried Mark, a minute later. "What do you think it is, a village?"

"It is a patch of woods," answered the professor, after using the field-glass. "Come, if we can gain that, perhaps we can throw those fellows off the trail."

Here was a new inducement to go on, and their jaded steeds were urged forward. Soon their pur-

suers discovered how they were headed, and set up a great shout, and at the same time fired several pistol shots into the air.

"I suppose that is a command to halt!" said Professor Strong. "Well, I don't propose to do it."

"Why not fire some shots in return, just to let them know we are armed?" suggested Mark.

"A good idea," was the answer, and half a dozen shots rent the air soon after. Looking back, they saw the *gauchos* and others halt. But not for long. Soon they came riding on as swiftly as before.

It was a good mile to the woods that had been discovered, and to the boys it seemed that they would never reach that longed-for shelter. Jake was in advance, lashing his steed unmercifully to make him go faster. As they got closer they wondered if the woods would be thick enough and deep enough to shelter them.

The sun was now going down in the west, flooding the broad pampas with a final golden glow. The trees of the forest cast long shadows over the prairie grass, and here and there small animals darted hither and thither, alarmed by the hoofbeats of the advancing steeds.

Just before they entered the woods, the professor

halted his horse and swung around in his saddle. His rifle came to his shoulder, and he took careful aim.

“Are you going to shoot at them?” asked Mark, with something like a gasp.

“No, at one of the horses,” was the answer, and then the rifle crack sounded out. The boys strained their eyes and saw the leading horse leap up, and then go down in a heap, hit in the foreleg. The rider went sailing in the air over his head, and pitched into the tall grass.

“That may teach them a lesson,” said the tutor, gravely. “Come, let us lose no more time!” And then one after another they entered the thicket before them.

CHAPTER XXV

PURSUED AND PURSUERS

FORTUNATELY for our friends, the woods they had entered proved to be of considerable extent. As was to be expected, they bordered a small stream, coming from some springs at the south end, and in the vicinity of these springs were numerous clumps of heavy bushes, some of them gorgeous in their flowers.

No time was lost in penetrating the woods to a distance of at least a quarter of a mile. Then they struck the small watercourse, and here Professor Strong called a halt.

“As you all know, water leaves no trail,” he said. “But hoofmarks can sometimes be traced even under water. To throw them off their guard more completely, we will enter the stream, go down a short distance, and then turn and go up. Then, if they make an inspection, they will see the hoofprints leading both ways, and it will bother them.

From now on make as little noise as possible, for, despite the shot I gave them, they may be coming up to the woods as fast as ever."

They then entered the stream and did as he had mapped out. On going up the watercourse Amos Strong kept his eyes on the alert, and at one point located a spot where a small side stream came down from among some thick bushes. He forced his horse among these bushes, and then into the forest beyond, and one by one the boys on their steeds came after him.

"Now, if they do not hear us, they will have great difficulty in following us," said the professor. "But we will continue to go on as long as it is light, and get away from them as far as possible."

"But how are we heading?" questioned Jake.

"We are heading eastward, the way we want to go," returned Professor Strong. "My idea is, if possible, to get to the other side of this forest before morning, and then strike out across the pampas once more, leaving our followers searching for us here. By that means we may get another very good start of them."

"We may get lost in the forest," grumbled the lank youth.

"We'll have to run that risk, Jacob. But I do not see how we can become lost when I have my compass with me."

After this they advanced in silence, the tutor going ahead slowly, for it was now dark, and he had no desire to step in a soft spot or a water hole. Thus they went on fully a quarter of a mile, when Sam, who rode a little to one side, uttered an exclamation.

"What's the matter?" asked several of the others.

"Ugh! I just ran into a big spider web, and some spiders were in it!" answered the Boston youth, in disgust.

"Be careful that none of the spiders bite you," returned Amos Strong. "They may be poisonous."

"I can hardly see," said Frank. "I wish we had a light."

"It would not be wise to make a light," answered the tutor. "I hope to reach the edge of the forest before long."

But this was not to be, and presently they came to a spot where the growth of timber was extra heavy. Here it was almost impossible to advance

on horseback, and they dismounted and gathered close together for a consultation.

"You had better remain here, while I go on and investigate," said Amos Strong. "If you keep quiet, I am almost certain it will be impossible for those rascals to find you."

"Don't you want somebody along?" asked Mark.

"Well, you may go if you wish. We will proceed on foot, leaving our horses here."

"Can't we get something to eat?" asked Frank. Riding always made him hungry.

"Yes, Frank. But I would not advise you to light a fire, unless you can find a deep hollow, where the light cannot be seen."

After Mark and the professor had departed, the others tethered their steeds, and then proceeded to make themselves as comfortable physically as their means afforded. Mentally all were nervous, not knowing at what moment their enemies might show themselves.

"That bandit, Anzenos, must know all about these woods," said Jake. "And as we are green, he has the advantage of us."

"Yes, but that shot the professor fired may keep

them at a distance," returned Darry. "They may think we are still at the edge of the forest, lying low for them, and ready to take a shot at 'em on sight."

"I hope that is so," said Frank. "But I imagine that bandit is no coward—and what he has done in the past proves it. He is willing to take big chances to gain his ends."

After this talk the boys lapsed into silence, every ear on the alert for any sound that might indicate the approach of the enemy. They ate some crackers and dried beef, and washed the scanty meal down with water from a spring.

"Oh, for a good porterhouse steak and some green corn and potatoes!" sighed Frank.

"And a piece of apple pie on the side!" added Sam.

"And some doughnuts and cup-custard for me," said Darry.

"Huh! I'd be satisfied with plain corned beef and cabbage," grunted Jake. "I'm dog tired of this living out of a knapsack."

"What a treat it will be to eat a good meal at home!" went on Frank, with something like a sigh.

"If we ever get home," was Jake's comment.

"For all you know, none of us may ever see the United States again."

"Oh, don't croak like that, Jake!" cried Darry. "We'll get out of this trouble, see if we don't."

"If so, it can't come any too quick for me," returned the lank youth, and then heaved a mountainous sigh.

They all felt depressed, yet did their best to keep up their spirits. Though the stars were shining brightly, it was dark under the trees, so that they could see next to nothing. They kept quiet, and the only sounds that broke the stillness were the movements of the horses as they ate the leaves from the brushwood, and the call of the night birds. Once came something of an alarm, but it proved to be nothing more than the movements of several small animals through the brushwood.

"I wonder when the professor and Mark will be back," ventured Darry, after an hour had gone by.

"There is no telling," returned Frank. "Maybe not till daylight."

All felt tired, yet sleep, just then, was out of the question. Every time a horse moved, or a bird cried out, all would sit up alert, and each had his

pistol where it could speedily be brought into use if needed.

Almost another hour dragged by, and Jake and Frank were in a light doze through sheer weariness, when Darry and Sam heard a low whistle from a distance. It was the well-known signal, and Darry at once answered. Then, after an interval, he answered again, and presently Mark and the professor appeared from among the shadows.

"The edge of the forest is but a short distance away," said Professor Strong, "and we have located a fair trail, running in the direction we want to go. I do not think we can do better than move out to the trail while it is still dark, and place as much distance as possible between ourselves and our pursuers."

"That suits me," cried Jake, who had roused up. "Maybe we can reach some village by morning."

"Possibly, Jacob, although I doubt it. Settlements in this part of Argentina are few and far between. But we may get to some *estancia*, where we can secure protection from our enemies until the authorities can be notified, and steps taken to get rid of the ruffians."

The tutor and Mark had made a note of the way

they had come, and now they led the way through the thickets, the others following. All were on foot, for the branches of the trees hung so low that riding was out of the question. They had to cross another small stream, and here they stopped for a final drink, and to water their horses.

When the edge of the forest was gained, Amos Strong called a halt, and he went out on the pampas to reconnoiter.

“So far as I can see, the coast is clear, with absolutely nobody in sight,” he said. “So the best thing we can do is to get in the saddle and ride as hard as we can until this spot is left out of sight. If we can thus fool those bandits, and the others, they may spend all night and to-morrow in these woods looking for us.”

Once out of the forest, all mounted their steeds, and then, at the command of the professor, they swept out on the pampas in a bunch. By the bright starlight the trail to be followed was clearly discernible, and along this they galloped in pairs, the only sound being the dull thud of the horses' hoofs. As they went on they looked back frequently, but none of the enemy came into view, nor did any alarm reach their ears.

"I reckon we fooled 'em nicely," was Jake's comment. "Well, it serves the rascals right."

"Do not be too sure that we have fooled them," answered the professor. "They may have witnessed our departure and thought best to pursue us in silence. Our best plan is to get ahead just as fast as we can."

After that, mile after mile was covered over the broad pampas, each rider urging his steed forward as best he could. But the horses were tired, and frequently dropped into a walk, and Frank's animal even wanted to lie down.

"My horse can't go much farther," said the lad.

"Whip him up!" cried Jake. "It's the only way."

"No, he is too tired, Jake. It is nothing but cruelty to ply a whip."

"You are right, Frank; I can see that the horse is utterly played out," said Amos Strong. "Well, I imagine all of them are tired. We'll call a halt as soon as we come to what looks like a good resting-place."

"But I thought we were to go on until we reached some village, or ranch," put in the lank youth.

"We cannot do the impossible, Jacob. Your

own horse looks ready to drop. We must save our horses, otherwise to escape our enemies will be impossible."

The best part of another mile was covered, the steeds dropping into a slow walk, and then the party came to a spot in something of a hollow that had been used for a camp before, and which looked inviting. Here they dismounted and tethered their horses, and then threw themselves on the ground to enjoy a much needed rest.

It was decided that one of the party should remain on guard, and Frank volunteered for this, as he saw that Mark and the professor were utterly fagged out. He remained awake two hours, and was then relieved by Sam, who, in turn, was relieved by Jake, and then Darry stood watch.

Daylight came without their enemies showing themselves, and then a small fire was lighted, and they had a cooked breakfast, to which all did full justice.

"Now, let us be on the way!" cried Professor Strong. "Our horses have had a fair rest, and ought to be able to carry us a good many miles."

The camping outfit was once more stowed away, and all prepared to leap into the saddle. Having

mounted, the tutor brought his field glasses into use, and swept the back trail with care.

“I can see something in the distance,” he announced. “But whether horsemen or cattle I cannot tell.”

“Let me look,” exclaimed Mark.

While he gazed through the glasses the distant object began to separate into a long line, each part of the object a rod or two away from that nearest to it.

“Those are not cattle!” cried Mark, “for cattle never travel in that way. They must be horsemen.”

“That is just what they are!” ejaculated Frank, after using the glasses. “They must be our enemies, spreading out to find our trail!”

“Come on, then!” shouted Jake, in alarm. “No use in staying here! Let us ride as fast as our horses can carry us!” And away he galloped, and the others came after him.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CATTLE STAMPEDE

"Do you think they are gaining on us?" asked Frank, after about half a mile had been covered, and they were certain that their enemies were in pursuit.

"They may be gaining a little," answered Mark. "But they are probably urging their horses to the limit."

"That is just what I think," put in Darry. "More than likely they hunted for us all night, and if so, their horses must be mighty tired."

"Those bandits may have better horses than ours," interposed Jake. "Most likely they are horses that have been stolen, and when such chaps steal, they steal the best."

On and on, and still on they went, the dull thuds of the horses' hoofs being the only sound that broke the stillness. Far behind came their pursuers, now no longer spread out in a line, but mov-

ing forward in a bunch. Evidently they had discovered our friends, and were making every effort to overtake them.

"They must have had to leave one fellow behind," remarked Darry, grimly.

"Who?" asked Jake.

"The fellow who had his horse shot from under him—that is, unless they had an extra horse."

"Most likely they have a number of extra horses," said Mark. "In fact, I know they have, for I counted 'em when they were spread out."

"What are we to do if they really do gain on us?" asked Sam.

"That remains to be seen," answered Professor Strong, gravely. "I do not wish to have you run the risk of being shot down. Perhaps, after all, it will be best to surrender."

"I'd rather pay those bandits something than be hurt," said Jake.

"Oh, let us ride just as hard as we can and see if we can't get away!" cried Darry. The idea of being "held up" and made to pay was exceedingly distasteful to him.

"I think I'd rather trust myself in the hands of the bandits than in the hands of Markel," said

Frank. "You can wager he has it in for us, and he'll make us suffer if he ever gets us in his clutches."

There was not much chance to say more, for each of the party was riding hard, and had to keep his eyes on his steed. They were coming to a bad part of the trail, where holes and soft spots abounded, and each was afraid his horse might sink down and perhaps break a leg—a dire misfortune at such a time as this.

Thus the chase kept up until noon. The clear sun now shone down hotly on the broad pampas, and riders and animals were commencing to grow thirsty. But not a sign of water was to be seen anywhere.

"We are sure to find water sooner or later," said Amos Strong. "These trails all lead to springs and rivers."

They looked back and were gratified to see that their pursuers were not so close as they had been an hour previous.

"Hurrah! they are dropping back!" exclaimed Frank. "Maybe they are going to give up the chase."

"I don't think they'll do that just yet," answered

Darry. "But we are certainly getting ahead of them."

"Don't stop!" urged Sam. "If we keep on, perhaps we'll be able to ride out of their sight. There is a rise of ground ahead, and that will hide us from their view."

Nobody needed urging, and on they went as before. It was very warm, for not a breath of air was stirring. All wondered how far it could be to the next drinking-place.

The top of the rise ahead was nearly a mile away, but on the higher ground the trail was better, and thus they were able to make as good progress as before, even though going up hill. Jake was in the lead, with the others strung out behind him. The Pennsylvanian youth rode as if he did not wish to stop until safe in some village or at some ranch.

The top of the hill was gained, and they were gratified to see at a distance ahead a small patch of timber. This must indicate water, and thither they headed their thirsty steeds. The horses evidently smelt the water, for they now advanced without urging.

In among the trees they found a small but clear spring. The water was pure, and to the thirsty

travelers tasted like nectar. All had a drink, and then the horses were given a little, but not enough to do them harm in their heated condition.

"I suppose we really ought to rest——" commenced Darry, but at this Jake and Sam shook their heads, and so it was decided to go on without anything further being said. With something like a sigh they left the grateful shade and cooling spring behind, and once more rode out on the pampas, now seemingly hotter than ever. The trail was apparently well-traveled, so all had hopes that before long they would come in sight of some habitation or village.

"It's queer we don't meet some caravan or cattle," observed Sam. "I thought this country was full of them."

"It is no different from our own land," answered Professor Strong. "In spite of the advances of civilization, there are great stretches in the West and Southwest still unsettled. But the railroads being built will soon change all this."

They were riding down into a broad valley where the pampas grass, always heavy and coarse, was thicker than ever, when they came to a small thicket, where many tall flowers and trailing vines grew.

They had to pick their way around this, for fear of going down into some holes of which there were not a few in that vicinity.

Suddenly Sam's steed reared up and almost threw the Boston boy. Then Frank's horse gave a wild snort and turned back on the trail.

"What's the matter?" cried Mark, and then he discovered the cause of the trouble. "Snakes!" he yelled.

"Yes, and dozens of them!" cried Darry. "Look out that your horses are not bitten. They may be poisonous!"

It was true, the thicket was a regular hot-bed for snakes, and now the reptiles glided forth in all directions, hissing viciously and showing their fangs. They were brown and black, with patches of white near the head and tail—ugly-looking creatures that made all of the party shudder.

The horses were as badly scared as their riders, and for the time being the professor and the boys had all they could do to keep in the saddle. Sam's steed and that ridden by Jake were particularly agitated, and both lads came close to being thrown headlong among the reptiles. One snake wound itself around a foreleg of the steed ridden by Jake,

and horse and rider went nearly frantic until the reptile dropped back to the ground.

"No more snakes for me!" panted Jake, when the scare was at an end, and all had ridden to a safe distance.

"Was anybody bitten?" asked the tutor, anxiously.

"Not that I know of," answered Darry, with a look at the others.

"I was afraid we might run into a den of snakes," went on Professor Strong. "They are common down here, and play sad havoc sometimes with the cattle and horses. The *gauchos* get used to them, and sometimes have what they call snake hunts, with prizes to the fellows who kill the most snakes. I once heard of a *gaucho* going out on such a hunt, and in three days killing nearly three hundred fair-sized snakes."

"Phew! that's a snake story!" murmured Darry. "But I am willing to believe it, after seeing such a den of snakes as that. Why, a fellow with a shotgun could kill a hundred there in less time than it takes to tell it."

"The *gauchos* don't use shotguns. They use what they call a snake lasso and the *bolas*. With

such a lasso, or the *bolas*, they can strike and kill a snake from a considerable distance."

They made a wide detour around the snakes' nest, and then continued on the trail, presently gaining the top of another rise. From this viewpoint they gazed back eagerly over the trail by which they had come, but could see no signs of their pursuers.

"But they are chasing us, I am sure of it," said Jake. "Come ahead, until we reach some kind of a village, or ranch."

But the others wished to rest, if only for a short while, and so they dismounted and threw themselves down in the tall grass. The lank youth was too nervous to even sit still, and so wandered around among the horses, and made use of the field glass the professor had loaned him.

"I see something coming!" he cried, presently, and this announcement made all of the others spring up. "It isn't from behind us, it's from in front," Jake went on.

"And what is it?" questioned the others.

"I can't make out exactly, either horses or cattle. They are coming this way pretty swiftly, though."

One after another looked through the field

glasses, and it was Darry who announced that the oncoming mass were cattle, and nothing else.

"They seem to be headed right for this spot," he added, after another long look through the glasses.

"I hope some *gauchos* are driving them," said Sam. "If they are good fellows, they will tell us what to do, and aid us."

Closer and closer came the herd of cattle, until they could be plainly seen with the naked eye. They had stretched out until they formed a line reaching almost across the little valley below the rise of ground. They came forward with strange snortings, and with a wild tossing of countless heads.

"Say, I don't like this!" cried Darry, uneasily, as the cattle came closer.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Frank, quickly.

"I think those cattle are stampeding—running away!"

"Oh, Darry, are you sure?" burst out Sam.

"It looks so to me."

"I believe you are right," said Amos Strong. "They would never run like that if they hadn't

been stampeded. Boys, we had better mount and ride out of harm's way."

"Are we in any danger?" asked Jake.

"Danger?" cried Darry. "Well, I just guess yes, Jake! Why, stampeding cattle have been known to run right over men and horses more than once!"

"But can't we chase 'em back?"

"Not such a herd as that. Why, there must be thousands of 'em! No, the only thing we can do is to ride to the north or the south, out of their way."

By this time all were in the saddle once more. The horses had sighted the running cattle, and were now almost as nervous as when in the vicinity of the den of snakes.

"Watch your horses, or they may run away from you!" cried Professor Strong. "And follow me!"

Leaving the trail, they swept along the rise of ground and then off to the northward. They thus hoped to get out of the path of the rushing cattle. From a distance came the thunder of countless feet, and a cloud of dust arose from the dry pampas and the still drier trail.

All knew that they had some hard riding to do to escape, and each urged his steed forward at topmost speed. They were riding along the front line of the frightened cattle, but the end of the line was a considerable distance away.

“See! see!” screamed Sam, a moment later. “They are swinging around!”

The boy from Boston was right; slowly but surely the herd was heading in a new direction—directly for our friends!

“Ride! ride! As hard as you can!” called out Professor Strong. “It is our one hope of escape!”

Scarcely had he spoken, when there came a call of dismay from Frank.

“My horse!” wailed the youth. “He has gone lame!”

All looked at the steed, and saw that what the New York lad said was true. The steed had something in his left front foot, and was limping along painfully.

Then all looked toward the cattle, and saw that the herd was coming forward as madly as ever. What should they do to save themselves?

CHAPTER XXVII

LOST ON THE PAMPAS

DARRY was close beside Frank, and in a trice he called to the latter to halt, and at the same time reined in his own steed and sprang to the ground.

“What are you going to do?” asked Professor Strong, as he, too, stopped short. The others continued to go ahead.

The Western youth did not answer. Instead, he ran up to Frank’s animal and raised up the foot that had so suddenly gone lame.

A short distance back the party had passed some thorn brush. All had avoided stepping on the thorns but Frank, who had gone straight through the bushes. Darry imagined that the horse had taken a big thorn with him, and in this surmise he was right.

The thorn was deep in the flesh, and the Western youth had no easy task to extract it. But the animal was patient enough to stand still, and soon the

thorn was out and Darry held it up before casting it away.

“There! that is what caused the trouble!” cried the boy from Chicago. “Now, go ahead, and see if you can catch the others!” And he again sprang into the saddle.

The delay had been a short one, yet the stampeding cattle were now dangerously close.

“I’ll give them a shot or two!” cried Amos Strong. “You boys may do the same!”

He swung his rifle into position and aimed at one of the foremost of the oncoming beasts. The report of the weapon was followed by a bellow of pain, and down into the pampas grass rolled a big bull, shot in the neck.

The rifle shot was followed by several shots from the boys’ pistols. A number of the cattle were hit, but none seriously. Yet the shots served to stay the rush for the moment, and thus our friends gained precious time.

“There is the end of the line!” cried Sam. “Come on, we have only a hundred feet more to ride!”

On they went. They could now hear the snorting and plunging of the cattle plainly, and they

were afraid that they might be surrounded at any instant. Once in the midst of that wildly-struggling mass, they knew that escape would be out of the question.

“Come on!” screamed Jake, and rode ahead, lashing his horse viciously—a useless thing to do, since the animal was already trying its best to get out of danger. But the lank youth was so full of terror he knew not what he was doing.

A few seconds more, and the last of our friends passed beyond the range of the stampeding cattle. On thundered the great mass, herded close together, heads and horns bobbing wildly up and down, and feet digging deeply into the pampas grass. Sometimes one of the mass would lose its footing and fall, and then it would speedily be trampled to death by those coming behind.

The professor and the boys had been riding down hill. Now they went up a small rise, and from this point of view they watched the stampeding cattle as they continued to rush over the broad pampas.

“How long will they run?” asked Frank, when he had somewhat regained his breath.

“Until they are exhausted, or until something

happens to stop them," answered Professor Strong, with a sigh of relief.

"Say, that was a narrow escape!" murmured Mark. "No more stampeding cattle for me!"

"I reckon I had the narrow escape," said Frank. "Darry, that was very kind of you—to stop and pull out that thorn," he added, with a grateful look.

"Oh, it wasn't much to do," answered the Western lad, modestly. "I knew that the horse couldn't go on with such a thorn in his foot."

"I wish the cattle would run into Markel and that bandit bunch," came from Sam. "It would serve 'em right to be surrounded and trampled under."

"What a fate that would be!" murmured Frank.

"No worse than they deserve," came promptly from Jake. "Maybe they will catch it—the cattle were headed that way."

They watched the cattle out of sight, and then turned and slowly continued on their way eastward. They had lost the trail they had been pursuing, but hoped, sooner or later, to pick it up again.

But in this they were disappointed. They did

not know that the trail curved to the southward, to several *estancias*, and to a number of villages, where they might readily have obtained aid against the bandits and their other enemies. Their riding took them to a lonely part of the great pampas, where there was not the slightest sign of a trail, or of a human habitation.

"Where are we going?" asked Darry, when the sun was getting low and they had stopped, to rest and to get something to eat. They had come upon the carcass of one of the cattle, trodden to death by its followers, and had cut out some generous steaks, to cook or to take with them.

"I must confess I do not know," answered Amos Strong. "We have been riding by the compass, but it does not seem to land us anywhere. I fancied we would gain some *estancia* long before this."

"Then we are lost on the pampas!" cried Jake, in dismay.

"So it would seem, Jacob. But I am in hope that we will soon strike another trail."

Supper over, and the horses rested a bit, they pushed on, hoping to reach some spot where they could obtain water. All were so tired that they

could scarcely sit upright, and the steeds moved onward at no better pace than a walk.

Slowly the sun sank over the mountains in the far west, and one by one the stars came out in the clear sky overhead. It was silent all around them, and soon a lonely feeling commenced to creep over one boy after another.

"I must say, I don't like this much," whispered Frank to Mark. "I wish we could hit a trail, or a ranch, or something."

"I don't like it myself," was Mark's answer. "It's so lonely you can fairly feel it, can't you?"

"The only consolation is the fact that those bandits will have a job locating us," went on Frank. "They'll think we stuck to the trail."

"Or else they'll think we were killed by the stampeding cattle."

"We may as well come to a halt and go into camp for the night," said Professor Strong, a short time later. "Here is a little hollow, and in that we can build a fire and cook some of those nice steaks we brought along. The water may not be extra good, but we'll make it do, although I advise you not to drink more than you actually need."

"Let the horses try it first," suggested Darry. "Out West we always do that—if we are suspicious of water. A horse won't touch it if it isn't fit to drink."

The horses drank the water in the hollow with eagerness, and, seeing this, the professor and the boys also drank some, and used a pot of it for making coffee. Then they broiled several juicy steaks, and from these and some crackers, and the coffee, made quite a fair meal. After that the fire was put out, so that its light could not guide their enemies to the camp.

All were so worn out from their hard riding that each was glad enough to lie down and sleep. A guard was maintained, the professor and each of the youths doing duty as before. There was only one alarm, but this was caused by one of the horses breaking loose. The animal was soon caught and tethered more securely.

In the morning the sun came up as clear as ever, flooding the rolling pampas with its golden glow. Some of the boys were already astir, and they cooked a hearty breakfast before they awakened the professor.

"Well, I can't see a thing," announced Mark,

after turning the field glasses in every direction along the horizon. "It's nothing but pampas and more pampas, as far as the glasses carry. We are out on a regular sea of waving grass, with the hills and hollows for billows!"

"Then we are lost on the pampas, and no mistake!" murmured Sam. "Professor, what are we to do?"

"There is but one thing to do, Samuel, and that is to go on until we strike a trail or an *estancia*, or meet some friendly *gauchos*, or other persons, to direct us. To remain here would be foolish. Our provisions will not last forever, and we may not be fortunate enough to pick up more meat."

"Hadn't we better carry some of this water with us?" suggested Darry.

"Yes, we will fill our canteens, and also the kettle and the coffee pot, and you had better drink your fill, and give the horses their fill, too."

Breakfast over, they did as the tutor suggested, and then set off once more, due eastward by the compass. They had a broad, flat stretch of the pampas to cover, and then followed a series of little hills and hollows, not unlike the long swells of the ocean. Some of the hollows had holes in them,

and here they had to travel with care, for fear of some mishap to their steeds.

On every side was the coarse, waving grass, with here and there a small clump of bushes, many of them rich with flowers of various colors. In the bushes nested the pampas birds, and these would fly forth in wonder at the approach of the travelers.

"Talk about small game!" cried Frank. "If it comes to the pinch, we can live on birds!"

"Yes, they would make a rare pot-pie!" answered the professor, with a smile.

It was shortly before noon when they topped a rise higher than any others in that vicinity. All were wondering what lay beyond.

"A house! A house!" cried Darry, who was in advance. "A house at last!"

All came up to the top of the hill in haste, and looked in the direction he pointed out. They were rather disappointed to note that the building he had seen was but a small one of sticks and sods, standing out by itself as though lost in the midst of the lonely pampas.

"It is a *gauchos'* hut," explained Professor Strong. "They use them to live in during the sea-

son when they are rounding up and branding cattle. I doubt if you will find anybody there now, for the branding season is past."

"It's too bad!" muttered Jake. "If only one fellow was there he might tell us how to travel to get somewhere."

They soon reached the hut, to find it deserted, just as Amos Strong had surmised. The inside was practically bare, containing nothing but a bed of dried grass, and a stone crock, evidently for water. Outside the hut were the remains of a fireplace and a temporary corral.

"I see something of a trail!" exclaimed Mark, who had gone beyond the hut. "It leads to the southeastward."

All came forward and examined the marks through the grass with interest.

"It must be a trail leading to some *estancia*," said Professor Strong. "Probably the ranch to which the *gauchos* who come here belong. And if that is true, the best thing we can do is to follow it."

They stopped at the hut for lunch and to rest the horses, and then pushed forward once more. Beyond the hut the pampas grew more level, and

soon they could see for many miles in all directions.

"I don't see any ranch!" sighed Sam, after riding for over an hour. "We are lost as much as we ever were!"

"Yes, Sam, but this trail must lead somewhere," answered Mark.

"Maybe not. I've heard of trails losing themselves out on the prairies. This may do the same thing."

The professor had his field glasses out, and was slowly sweeping the pampas in every direction. He could see nothing ahead, nor to the north and south. Then he turned to look behind them to where they had left the hut to follow the newly discovered trail.

He could see the hut in the dim distance, and the hill from which they had discovered the shelter. As the glass swept the hilltop he drew a quick breath. Then he looked more closely, and presently handed the glasses to Mark.

"Tell me if you see anything on yonder hill," he said, in a low voice.

Mark took the glasses and gave a sharp look.

"Yes, I do!" he cried. "I see something

moving—some men on horseback! They are coming this way!”

“It must be the rascals who have been following us!” exclaimed Jake. And all the others felt that what he said was true.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ESCAPING THE PAMPAS FIRE

“Do you think they have discovered us?” questioned Frank, after they were sure it was Anzenos and his band, as well as Markel and his crony, who were riding down from the little hill.

“It is more than likely,” answered the tutor. “They must have discovered the trail we made through the deep grass.”

“Yes, and they are headed right for us!” cried Jake, who was now using the glasses. “Come on, let us get out of here!”

The others needed no urging, and forward they went as before, but now keeping to the imperfect trail they had discovered. It was exceedingly hot, the sun shining down from a sky that was without a cloud.

“If only we would reach another forest!” sighed Sam, as mile after mile was covered. “I’m about baked, and so sore I can hardly keep in the saddle.”

"So am I," added Frank. "I am just so played out I almost feel like halting and fighting those chaps."

"Don't you do it!" cried Jake, in alarm. "They outnumber us three to one, and they've got rifles and shotguns, and I don't know what! We'd stand no chance at all against them!"

"I can see something, far off in that direction," said Darry, pointing ahead with his hand. "Whether it is some cattle, or buildings, or a woods, I can't make out."

"Looks to me like a cloud coming up," returned Mark, a minute later. "It wouldn't hurt if it did get cloudy, and I shouldn't mind a shower."

They continued to ride on, the tired horses moving slower and slower at every step. Looking back, they could make out their pursuers quite plainly, although they were still a long distance off.

"Maybe we ought to give 'em a shot," suggested Jake.

"If we did that, they might do some shooting on their own account," answered Amos Strong, grimly. "No, we'll try to outride them and trust to luck to reach some friendly *ranchero's* place, or some village."

The object that Darry had noted continued to grow larger, but they were still too far off to make out what it was. But that it was no *estancia* they felt quite sure.

"It's either a forest or a low-hanging cloud," said the professor. "And I am rather of the opinion that it is a cloud."

"So am I," added Darry. "And the reason it doesn't grow larger is because the breeze is blowing from us instead of towards us."

"And because that breeze is behind us we can't feel it," came from Mark. "I wish the wind would turn, so we could feel it in our faces."

Soon they found themselves going up a slight rise, so gradual that it could hardly be noticed from a distance. Here the horses moved slower than ever, in spite of all their efforts to urge them forward.

"I think those fellows are gaining on us!" exclaimed Frank, as he paused to look back. "Don't they seem closer to you, Mark?"

"They certainly do. But that can't be helped, we are riding as hard as we can."

"They won't make such good time when they strike this rise," put in Amos Strong, consolingly.

"Their horses cannot be any fresher than our own."

"I am hoping that there will be some kind of a ranch on the other side of this long hill," said Darry. "See the cross trails here and there? They show we are coming a bit closer to civilization."

"You are right, Dartworth," returned the tutor. "Come, let us make the best of our chances."

They continued to mount the rise, which was steeper near the top than it had been below. The horses panted painfully, and every now and then one would lift his head and sniff the air.

"Wonder if they smell water, or a stable?" mused Frank, as he noticed the steeds.

"Maybe they smell oats!" cried Darry. "Hope they do!"

"I think I smell smoke!" cried Jake, who, as usual, was in advance.

"Smoke!" cried the others, and drew in the air through their nostrils.

"I smell smoke myself!" said the tutor, sniffing the air keenly.

"Hurrah! we must be near some camp, or ranch!" burst out Frank. "Hurry up and see!"

Side by side he and Jake climbed the rest of the rise, and the others came close behind. As they did this, Professor Strong looked back, to behold their enemies fast gaining on them. In the lead was Anzenos, and not far behind the bandit rode Dan Markel.

The breeze had been shifting, and now, as the top of the rise was gained, it blew directly into the faces of our friends. It was a strong breeze, and every instant it was growing stronger.

"Look! look!" fairly screamed Frank, and came to a sudden halt.

"It's a fire!" bawled Jake. "The pampas are on fire!"

The others came up and looked, and saw that what the lank youth said was true. The broad pampas beyond the rise were on fire as far as the eye could reach. The smoke had been blowing away from them, but now, with the turning of the breeze, smoke and flames came rolling towards them with incredible swiftness.

"Oh, what shall we do?" asked Jake. "If we stay here we'll be burned up!"

"We must turn and go back!" burst out Sam. "It's our only chance!"

"If we do that, we'll ride right into the hands of those bandits!" groaned Frank.

"But that is better than being burned alive!"

"Those fellows will have their hands full saving themselves," argued Darry. "They won't think of us as soon as they see that fire."

All of the boys looked at Professor Strong, wondering what he would advise. He had drawn out his field glasses again and was taking a hasty look towards the pampas fire, and to the north and the south.

"I see a patch of timber to the northward!" he cried. "That may indicate the presence of water. And if not, we stand a better chance of escaping the flames in a dense forest than we do out here among this dry grass."

"Yes, and the wind is blowing a bit to the southwestward!" added Darry. "Let us make for the timber."

There was no time to argue the situation, and all followed the professor, as he left the top of the rise and turned in the direction of the forest he had discovered.

The breeze continued to increase, and with it came the smoke and the smell of the burning pam-

pas grass. These made the horses nervous and the riders had all they could do to control the steeds. Mark's horse wanted to rush directly for the fire, and the tutor had to turn back and come to the lad's assistance, to make the animal follow the others.

As they moved on, the boys glanced back to the top of the rise, towards which the fire was swiftly leaping. Presently they saw one horseman show himself, followed by several others. Then the riders turned and disappeared as fast as they had come.

"That's a surprise for them!" muttered Darry. "They'll have warm work of it getting away from that fire! They are closer to it now than we are."

"Come on! Don't wait!" urged Amos Strong. "The wind may shift in our direction any instant!"

They continued to move toward the timber, which could now be seen through the drifting smoke. Swiftly the pampas fire was creeping toward the party. The air grew hot and scarcely fit to breathe. The horses snorted and plunged in fright, trying to unseat their riders, that they might run on alone.

But all clung fast, realizing that to keep on riding

was the one chance of escape. A puff of air sent a thick cloud of smoke down on them, causing them to cough and splutter. The smoke made the tears run from their eyes. Then came another puff of wind, carrying with it some burning wisps of grass.

“Ouch!” yelled Jake, and not without reason, for he had been burnt on the neck. Professor Strong and Frank were burnt on the hands, and Mark received some burning grass in his face, but quickly brushed it away.

The timber was now less than a hundred yards away, and the pampas fire was about the same distance. Then came a rush of hot air and smoke that nearly blinded horses and riders.

“This way!” yelled Amos Strong, as loudly as he could. “This way, quick!”

He had seen a small opening leading to the depths of the forest, and into this they urged their horses, going forward in a bunch. They bumped into one another, and Darry and Mark got some bruises on the legs, but just then they paid no attention to the hurts.

“Water! I see water!” burst presently from Frank’s lips.

"Huh! it's only a brook!" muttered Jake.
 "That won't save us from such a fire!"

"It's better than nothing," retorted Frank. "We can lie down in it, if we have to."

"This brook may lead to a larger stream," said Professor Strong, urging his horse forward. "Let us follow it and see."

The horses wanted to stop for a drink, but this the riders would not allow, for every second was precious. They went splashing along the tiny watercourse, which widened out and grew deeper as they advanced. The smoke now hid the light of the sun and drifted through the timber, making the birds flutter about with shrill notes of alarm. But no fire reached the travelers, for which they were thankful.

Presently, just as the tutor had hoped, they found the brook emptying into a much larger stream. Here they came to a halt, and allowed the horses to drink, while they bathed their faces and hands, and otherwise refreshed themselves. They were gratified to see that the wind was again shifting, blowing the smoke away from them.

"Do you—er—think we are safe?" stammered Jake, after Professor Strong had made a careful

inspection of their surroundings, and had looked at the sky.

"I hope so, Jacob. All we can do is to wait and see how matters turn out. So long as that fire is raging we cannot go on. We'll stick to the water."

The horses were tethered at the river bank, and the travelers sat down to rest, and thus a dismal hour went by. They knew that the pampas fire was raging beyond the timber, and also knew that the wind might shift again and drive it towards them.

"If it comes in here we'll have to ford or swim the river," said Professor Strong. "Or maybe we'll have to remain in the water until it burns itself out."

Another hour passed, and still the fire did not come their way. The wind had now turned around and was blowing from the same direction it had in the morning.

"That will drive the fire back," said Professor Strong. "And it may burn itself out for the want of fuel. I trust it does."

"Do you think Markel, Radell, and those bandits escaped?" questioned Darry.

“It is hard to say. The fire was rushing towards them very rapidly.”

“I hope it did reach them!” came harshly from Jake.

“Oh, Jake, would you want them burned up?” cried Sam.

“It’s no more than those rascals deserve,” muttered Jake. “They had no business to follow us and try to make us prisoners.”

“It would be a dreadful fate for anybody,” murmured Mark. “I’d not want a dog to suffer such a fate as that.”

CHAPTER XXIX

ON TO ROSARIO

TOWARDS sundown the breeze died down utterly, and it was very warm even by the river side. Leaving the others with the horses, Professor Strong and Mark went up the smaller watercourse, and then out to the edge of the timber.

A desolate sight met their gaze. As far as eye could reach the ground was covered with the smoldering remains of the heavy pampas grass. Here and there could be seen the carcass of some animal, now a steer, then a wild horse, and again a rabbit or a pampas dog.

"Do you think the fire has burned itself out?" asked Mark, after they had tramped around for half an hour.

"It has so far as this district is concerned," answered the tutor. "It was a terrible happening while it lasted," he went on, with a shudder. "If

those stampeding cattle got into it, more than likely every animal was killed by the fire!"

They walked over to where the partly-burned body of a big steer lay. The ground was still hot, so that it was far from comfortable to stand still. With his hunting-knife, Amos Strong cut from the carcass such meat as the party could use, and he and Mark carried it back to where they had left the others.

It was a night never to be forgotten. All were completely exhausted, even the horses preferring to lie down rather than eat. The tutor and the boys rested fully an hour before preparing a meal, and after it was eaten they went to sleep, one at a time remaining on guard, as before.

Mark was on the watch from midnight to two o'clock in the morning. To keep himself awake he tramped up and down the river bank many times. He had his pistol ready for use, also a stout stick, but he hardly anticipated an attack, feeling that the pampas fire had ended the plans of their enemies, at least for the time being.

Presently, as Mark looked down the river, he thought he saw a dark object moving slowly in the water, close to one of the banks.

"Maybe it's only a branch of a tree, or a block of wood," he thought.

He watched the object, and as it drew closer he made out the form of a man. The fellow was alone, and moved slowly along, in water up to his ankles.

"Halt!" cried the youth, and raised his pistol. Then he gave a call, to arouse his companions.

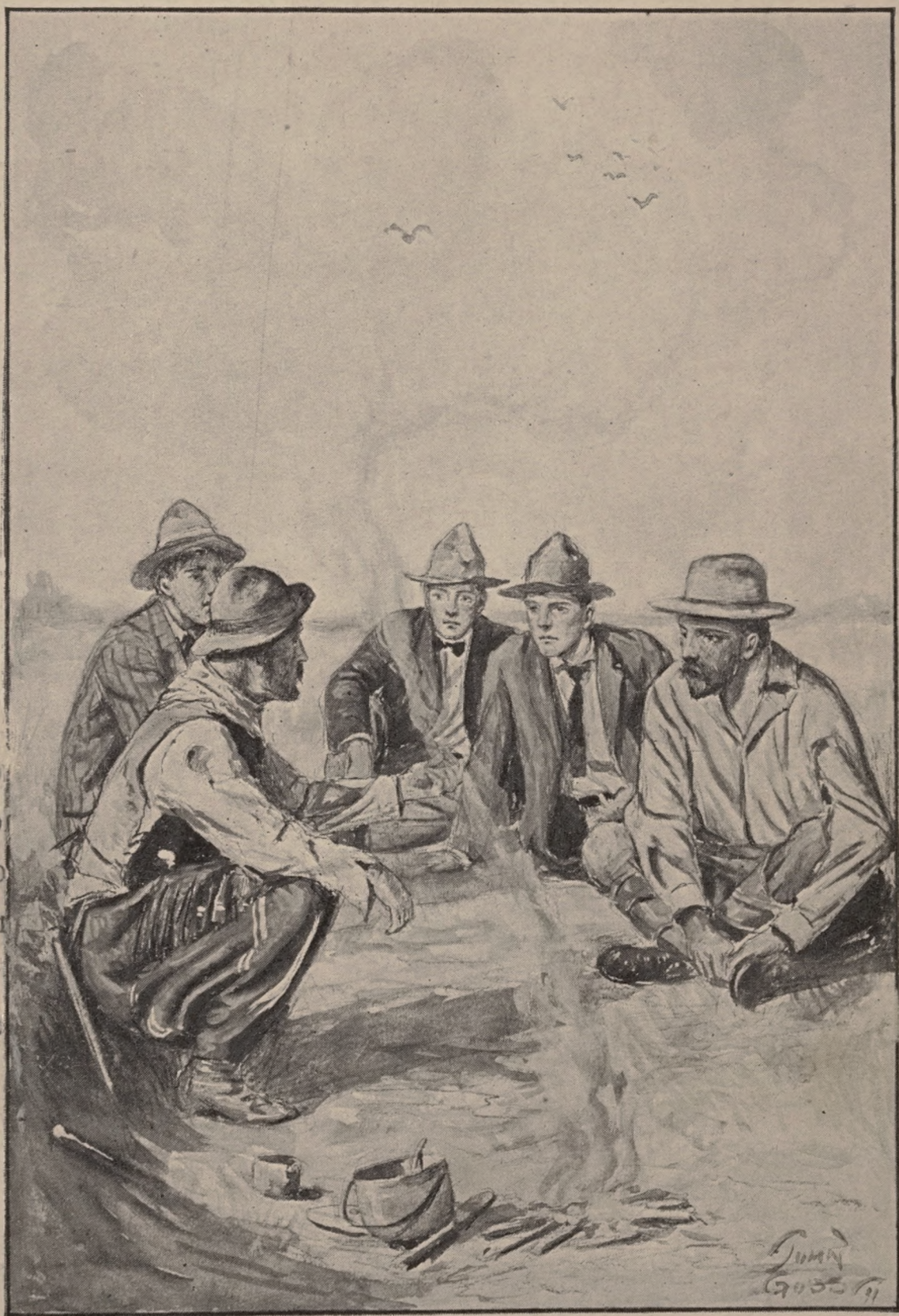
"Do not shoot, I beg of you!" cried the approaching man, in Spanish.

"Up with your hands!" ordered Mark, and as the man's hands went into the air he added: "Are you alone?"

"*Si, señor.*"

By this time Professor Strong and Darry were awake, and each ran forward to join Mark, the tutor carrying his rifle. But there was no need for firearms, for the man who had come up was in no humor to fight. He was a *gaucho*, and his clothing was burned full of holes, as was also his hat.

"He is one of the Anzenos band!" cried Darry. "I remember him well. His name is Cellaboni. He is one of the chaps who made me a prisoner."



IT WAS NOT UNTIL MORNING THAT CELLABONI WAS ABLE TO TELL
HIS STORY.—Page 313.

“For the love of Heaven, have mercy on me!” cried the *gaucho*, and, coming out of the river, sank on his knees in front of our friends. “See how I am burned!” he went on, showing his bare arms and his breast. “Have mercy on me and help me, or I shall die!” And then he sank on his side, clearly exhausted.

The *gaucho* made a truly pitiable spectacle, and the hearts of all the boys were touched, even Jake turning away to repress a shudder. The fellow had fainted from exhaustion, and from his awful burns, and they had to carry him into the temporary camp. There they covered the burns with cooling oil, and otherwise made the sufferer as comfortable as their means afforded.

It was not until morning, after he had had something to eat and to drink, that Cellaboni was able to tell his story, and even then what had happened was not altogether clear in his mind. He related how the whole band under Anzenos, urged by Markel, Radell, and even Olano, had pursued the professor and the young explorers until, reaching the top of the hill, they had found themselves suddenly confronted by that long and terrible line of fire.

“We did not dream the fire was so near,” said the *gaucho*, brokenly. “And when the wind blew it directly down upon us, all of the party became panic-stricken. Anzenos tried to tell us what to do, but his horse became frightened and threw him to the ground, and then galloped away. Then, as the fire swept down on us, we scattered to the north and the south. I came in this direction, and so did two of the other *gauchos*, and Markel and Radell. We had to fight the fire every foot of the way, and when we at last reached the river, I was more dead than alive, and hardly knew what I was doing.”

“And what became of the others who were with you?” asked Amos Strong.

“One of the *gauchos* was thrown into the deep water by his horse, and, as he could not swim, he was drowned. The other *gaucho* swam the river with Markel and Radell, and then went on, leaving me behind. I begged of the three to aid me, but they paid no attention to my cries. I suffered so from my burns that I was nearly insane, and I wandered along through the shallow water until I arrived here.”

“Then you think that Markel, Radell, and that

other *gaucho* escaped?" asked Mark, with deep interest.

"*Si, señor*. But they did not deserve it, for they deserted me," answered Cellaboni.

"You said Anzenos fell from his horse," went on Amos Strong. "Did he get away?"

"No, as he went down his horse stepped on him. Then one of the other horses grew frantic and rushed over him, and that was the last I saw of him. He must be dead," added the *gaucho*. And this surmise, later on, proved to be correct. It may be added here that in that terrible pampas fire four of the bandits lost their lives and several others were, like Cellaboni, severely burned.

The suffering *gaucho* knew the country well, and he told the travelers that they were not far from the *estancia* of one Cecil Morriwell, a rich Englishman, of whom Professor Strong had heard. They were southeast of Cordoba, and less than a hundred miles from Rosario.

"Let us go on to the Englishman's ranch and then on to Rosario!" cried Jake.

"How far is it from Rosario to Buenos Aires?" asked Frank.

"About two hundred and thirty miles, down the

Paraña River," answered Professor Strong. "We can get one of the regular steamers if we are willing to wait a day or two," he added.

It was decided to move on in the direction of the Morriwell *estancia* that afternoon. They hardly knew what to do with the *gaucho*, but he begged them not to leave him behind.

"I would rather go to prison than be left here alone," he said.

"We might take turns carrying him," said Mark. "It's the only way."

The bandit was a plucky fellow, and although his burns hurt him exceedingly, he did not utter a single protest when he was taken up and placed on one of the horses. He was allowed to ride alone, the other taking turns in riding together.

The journey to the Morriwell *estancia* took them all of the afternoon and part of the evening. Several *gauchos* came out to meet them, and later on Mr. Morriwell, a burly Englishman, who had located in Argentina six years previously, showed himself and made them welcome.

"I was afraid that fire would swing in this direction," he said. "But luckily the wind carried it the other way, so I suffered but little."

Professor Strong and the boys were taken into the ranch home, a long, low, one-story affair, while the suffering bandit was taken to the *gauchos'* quarters. It may be said that Cellaboni remained at the *estancia*, and when he got well he reformed completely and was hired by the ranch owner to work with the other cowboys.

The Englishman listened with interest to what our friends had to tell regarding the bandits and their other enemies. He said that Anzenos had caused him much trouble, and if the bandit was dead it would be a good thing for the community at large.

Nearly a week was spent at the *estancia*, and during that time the boys witnessed a good deal of South American ranch life. They saw the *gauchos* round up some cattle and put them in the *saladero* and the corral, and also witnessed some fancy riding. Darry showed what he could do on horseback, and the native cowboys applauded his efforts vigorously.

It had been decided that they should start for Rosario on Monday morning, and preparations were made accordingly. Mr. Morriwell was sending a pack train to the city, and they accompanied

this as far as the village of Agobonia. Then they headed direct for Rosario, arriving at that city later in the week.

"Well, this is like living again!" cried Mark, when seated in a room in the leading hotel.

"My, what a number of adventures we have had since we started from home!" was Frank's comment.

"I'd like to know just one thing," said Darry, "and that is what became of Markel and Radell."

"I reckon we'd all like to know that," returned Jake. "But more than likely we'll never hear of them again."

By inquiring at the shipping office, they learned that they could get accommodations on a steamer going to Buenos Aires on the following Saturday. This would give them a full day in which to see the sights in Rosario.

"Rosario is a city of about a hundred thousand inhabitants," said Professor Strong. "It is a railroad terminus, and also the center of trade for a great deal of river shipping. We can spend some time looking at the shipping, and then take a drive around the other points of interest."

The view at the long docks interested the boys,

and they spent several hours in watching the great ships loading and unloading. Some boats were leaving off and taking on passengers, and they watched the people of various nationalities as they came and went.

"It certainly is quite a cosmopolitan place," was Mark's comment, after he had snapped pictures until he had used up his films.

One big steamer was just leaving with a fresh load of freight and passengers, and they looked over the crowd on the deck. As they did this, Frank gave a start.

"Look! look!" he cried.

"What do you see?" queried several of the others.

"Those two men on the rear deck! Don't they look familiar to you?"

"Markel and Radell!" cried Darry. "Well, what do you think of that!"

It was indeed the two men from Baltimore, and as Darry pointed excitedly with his finger, Markel saw him, and also caught sight of the others. He spoke to Radell, and the two sharpers got up and disappeared in the crowd.

"Well, that proves they escaped from the pam-

pas fire," said Sam, as the steamer disappeared on its way down the river.

"Yes, and I guess they have escaped from us, too," added Jake, bitterly.

"Was Olano with them?" asked Frank.

"I didn't see him," answered Darry. "What shall we do about it?" he continued, turning to Professor Strong.

"I don't know that we can do anything," was the reply. "Now that they know we saw them, those rascals will try to keep out of sight. They may even leave the steamer at the first stopping-place."

CHAPTER XXX

AT BUENOS AIRES—HOMEWARD BOUND

“OUR trip is almost at an end,” said Frank, when, on Saturday, they boarded the river steamer that was to take them from Rosario to Buenos Aires.

“Hardly,” answered Sam, “since we have still the trip from Buenos Aires to New York, a distance of nearly six thousand miles.”

“Well, once we are on the steamer homeward bound, we’ll have nothing to do but take it easy,” said Mark. “And I must confess I’d like nothing better than to loaf awhile.”

“And loaf without worrying,” added Jake. “No more pampas fires for me!”

“And no more earthquakes,” said Darry, with a grin.

“And no more adventures with savage animals,” added Sam.

“What yarns we will be able to tell when we get

back to school!" cried Mark. "The other fellows won't believe half of 'em!"

The trip down the broad Paraña and the still broader La Plata was full of delight to the young explorers, and as they sat on deck they talked over their many adventures. They passed various towns and made several stops, and all too soon the voyage came to an end, and they found themselves in Buenos Aires and quartered at a hotel which was as elegant in appearance and appointments as any they had stopped at in New York.

"What a magnificent city!" was Sam's comment, as he viewed the broad and well-kept streets, and the great office buildings and fine mansions.

"Buenos Aires has often been called the Paris of South America," said Professor Strong. "It covers seventy-two square miles of territory, and has about nine hundred thousand inhabitants—being the largest city in the Southern Hemisphere. As you can see, it has all the up-to-date improvements, trolley cars, electric lights, telephones, and is the terminus of the great transcontinental railway system. It is located on the bank of the La Plata, and the Atlantic Ocean is really over a hundred miles farther east."

“It must do a tremendous shipping business,” said Mark.

“I understand that the annual tonnage is about half that of New York, and four times that of San Francisco. Steamers sail from here to almost every civilized port on the globe, and, as you have already seen, sailing vessels without number can harbor here.”

From Rosario Professor Strong had telegraphed for accommodations not only at the hotel, but also for staterooms on a steamer that was to leave for New York on the following Thursday. This would give the young explorers ample time in which to view the various sights of the Argentine capital.

On the following day the boys packed their things for the journey to New York, and then visited the great university, the art gallery, and the military school. Another day was spent in the great stores of the capital, buying the last of the souvenirs to take home.

To make certain that their steamer accommodations were what they wanted for such a long journey, the whole party visited the ticket office of the transportation company. Here they had to wait a considerable time, as business was brisk, and the

boys improved the time by looking over some pictures of vessels and illustrated folders of various excursions.

Frank had just laid down a folder when he saw three men come in and walk up to the desk. The men were Dan Markel, Paul Radell, and Roberto Olano.

"Look!" he whispered, as he clutched Mark by the arm.

"Keep back, out of sight," was the quick return. "We must capture those rascals this time!"

Both boys signaled to the others and to Professor Strong. The tutor looked around, and seeing a policeman standing on the pavement outside the office, beckoned to him.

"Do you see those three men?" he said, in Spanish.

"Yes," was the officer's answer.

"I want them arrested. I and these young men will make a complaint against them. They are wanted on serious charges, so do not let any of them get away."

"You wish the whole three arrested?" asked the policeman, in astonishment.

"Yes."

"I cannot arrest them alone. I shall have to call assistance."

"Very well; but do not delay. We'll watch the men," answered the professor.

Markel and Radell had come to see about tickets to a point up the coast, and Professor Strong called one of the clerks aside and asked that the sharpers be detained as long as possible. This was done, much to their disgust.

"These South Americans are the slowest people on earth," growled Dan Markel. "They'll make you wait every time."

"Well, we are in no particular hurry," answered Paul Radell.

The policeman had sent in a hurry call for assistance, and soon four other officers appeared. Then the policeman came up to Professor Strong again.

"You are quite sure about these gentlemen?" he asked.

"Yes, arrest them at once," was the firm answer.

When confronted by the officers of the law, Markel, Radell, and Olano were dumfounded, and did not know what to say.

"I—I think you have—er—made a mistake," murmured Markel, in Spanish.

"This gentleman makes a charge against you," replied one of the officers, and pointed to Professor Strong.

The man from Baltimore turned swiftly. When he saw the professor he turned red, and then, as he beheld the boys, he went pale and gave a gasp.

"You!" he murmured.

"That crowd!" exclaimed Paul Radell. "How did they get here so soon!"

"I—I think I will leave!" faltered Roberto Olano, and turned to run away. But a policeman held him fast and handcuffed him.

"I suppose this game is up!" muttered Dan Markel, as he, too, was handcuffed.

"It is, Markel," answered Professor Strong, grimly. "I am going to see to it that you are placed where you belong, in prison."

"You'll have a lot of trouble doing it," answered the man from Baltimore. "And it will take time, too."

"Never mind," put in Mark. "It will be worth all the time it takes."

"That's the talk!" cried Jake. "I'd spend six

months in Buenos Aires just to put those rascals where they belong!”

A little later the three prisoners were taken to the police station, and there Professor Strong made a formal charge against them, and the boys told their stories to the officer in charge. Then the three offenders were committed to await further action.

The immediate trip home had to be abandoned, and the young explorers remained in Buenos Aires some time, until the charges against the prisoners were proven at their trial. All three were found guilty, and they were sent to prison for long terms of years.

“Well, that’s the last of Markel, Radell & Company!” cried Frank, when the proceedings were at an end. “And I am mighty glad of it!”

“And so am I!” added Jake. And the others said the same.

And now let me add a few words more and then bring this story of exploring and sightseeing in Argentina and elsewhere to a close.

On a clear, warm day the professor and the young explorers embarked on a steamer bound for

New York City. All were in the best of health, and even Jake was in high spirits. His former sourness was gone, and he acted like quite a different boy.

"Well, good-by to South America!" cried Darry, as the big steamer cast off and moved away from the dock.

"What thousands and thousands of miles we have covered since we left home!" added Sam.

"And how much we have seen!" said Frank.

"And what perils we encountered!" supplemented Mark.

"But it was a trip worth taking," broke in Jake. "I wouldn't have missed it for a good deal!"

"Even if we didn't stay in the big cities all the time; eh, Jacob?" said the professor, dryly.

"Yes, sir, I am glad, now, that you took us up the Orinoco and up the Amazon and over the Andes. And I'm glad we went through Central America and through those islands."

"Well, there is one thing certain, boys," said the tutor. "You know a great deal more about Central and South America than when you started."

"And I've got a dandy lot of pictures!" cried

Mark. "Hundred and hundreds of them! I am going to make a regular book of them when I get home—and each of you shall have copies," he added.

"And I've got some good photos, too," said Frank.

"And I've got my specimens," broke in Sam.

"And I've got those skins of wild animals," returned Darry.

"Well, I didn't make any collection," said Jake, gravely. "But I learned one thing, and that's a good deal. I learned how to control my temper."

"It is a great deal," said Professor Strong.

Slowly the great steamer left the harbor of Buenos Aires, and then turned her bow towards the heaving and sparkling Atlantic. The boys and the professor gathered on the afterdeck and watched the great city fade from view. Then they went forward, to greet the first view of the rolling ocean.

"And now for home!" cried Mark.

"Ho for home!" cried all of the others. And here we will leave the young explorers and say good-by.

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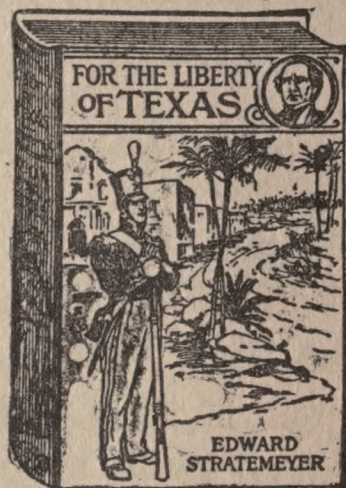
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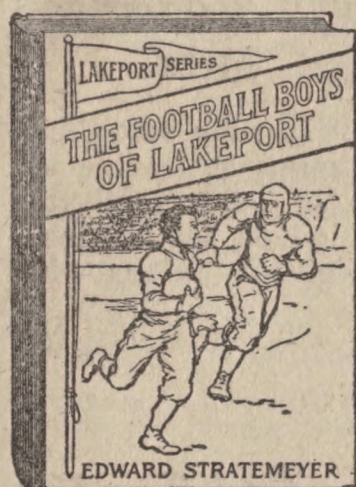
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